

SEGA SATURN: The three new arcade-perfect conversions you *have* to play

PlayStation ■ Saturn ■ 3D0 ■ Ultra 64 ■ PC CD-ROM ■ 32X ■ Jaguar ■ Arcade ■ Online

**30
PAGE**
Ultra 64
Special

NEXT GENERATION

Leading edge computer and video games

February 1996

Nintendo's Ultra 64

Mario's brave new 3D world

EXCLUSIVE:

- 18 games previewed
- Silicon Graphics quizzed
- *Super Mario 64* screen-shots
- Shigeru Miyamoto interview
- A look under the hood
- Nintendo's US plans

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into your brain



volume two

14

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Super Mario 64 was always destined to be Ultra 64's main attraction. But nobody expected that Shigeru Miyamoto's creation would have to single-handedly battle PlayStation and Saturn. The full Shoshinkai report begins on page 50





Ultra 64: Nintendo's shot at the title

It was the best kept **secret** in videogames. Some people say that it still is.

Ultra 64's launch at Tokyo's Shoshinkai exposition on November 24 was the most **anticipated** videogaming event of the 1990s, possibly of all time. (What could be more momentous than the world's most **powerful game machine** from the world's most powerful game company?)

But after the hype and excitement of first getting to grips with **Ultra 64** faded, it became apparent that Nintendo's **grand unveiling** posed more questions than it answered. Why were there only two playable games on show? Why hasn't Nintendo finalized details of its "bulky drive" alternative to **cartridges**? And why weren't the games utilizing all of Ultra 64's heralded graphics features?

NEXT Generation is the hardest working magazine in the US. But even we can't tell you the full story — the fact is that nobody knows it yet. Instead, we came back from Shoshinkai with **exclusive** interviews with **Shigeru Miyamoto** (the creator of *Mario*), **Howard Lincoln** (Nintendo of America's President), **Genyo Takeda** (head of Nintendo's R&D3 division — the unit responsible for Ultra 64) and **Silicon Graphics'** George Zachary. Make of their comments what you will.

The most comprehensive and thorough evaluation of Ultra 64 as it exists today starts on **page 36**.

NEXT GENERATION

February 1996

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NEXT Generation shares content with EDGE, a UK based magazine. What's brown and sticky? A stick. What's orange and sounds like a parrot? A carrot. What's a Stoat? I don't know, but you wouldn't want one in your pocket. Welcome aboard Jeff



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Is Ultra 64 as good as Silicon Graphics claims?

The power of Silicon Graphics workstations is almost cliché. But can SGI deliver that power at an affordable price in Ultra 64? For the answer, we went straight to the source. The result: an exclusive interview with SGI's techno guru George Zachary



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Ultra 64: Nintendo's shot at the Title

After two years of hype, rumors, and precious little information from Nintendo, its 64-bit super-system was revealed at the Shoshinkai exposition in Tokyo. Is Ultra 64 truly the quantum leap Nintendo has promised? NEXT Generation asks the tough questions



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Advertising (aka "Psst! Wanna buy a system?")

Sega and Sony will have spent more than \$100 million by the end of 1996, trying to convince you to buy their hardware. So how do they work out who you are? How do they know where to find you? And how do they make sure that their message gets through?



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When you're ready to find out the absolute authoritative word on the quality of shipping games, read the only reviews that matter — ours. The rundowns starts on page 156

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Is Ultra 64 as good as SGI claims?

Silicon Graphics developed the innards of Nintendo's new machine. Who better to ask if it's any good?

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Ultra 64: Nintendo's shot at the title

Exclusive interviews with Shigeru Miyamoto and Howard Lincoln. Plus exclusive game previews

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Psst! Wanna buy a game system?

Having great hardware is meaningless if no one buys it. So what do Sega and Sony do to get your cash?

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Alphas

Want to know what you will be playing in the next few months? Read about it first here. Featuring: Shellshock (multi); Destiny (Win 95); Theme Hospital (PC); Shrinking Character (multi); Samurai Spirits (Neo-Geo); Zombiville (PC); Spycraft (multi); Amok (Saturn); Sky Target (arcade); Syndicate Wars (PS-X); Scorchers (Saturn); Secret of Mana 2 (SNES); SF Alpha (multi)

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The 32-bit product explosion continues at a breakneck pace, and we have had the pleasure of playing 38 games this month so we can give you a definitive report on their quality

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The NEXT Generation lexicon...

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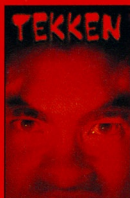
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Nintendo plans to leapfrog Sony's 32-bit PlayStation and Sega's 32-bit Saturn with its 64-bit Ultra 64. But videogamers have learned not to trust tech specs. And who cares how great the hardware is if game developers can't use it? NEXT Generation talks to George Zachary, Manager of Consumer Electronics Marketing at Silicon Graphics, to ask...

Is Ultra 64 as good as Silicon Graphics claims?



"It would be interesting to see if Sega would turn down the Ultra 64 technology now"

Silicon Graphics Industries designed and engineered Ultra 64's chips. The Ultra 64 project — inaugurated in August of 1993 and code-named "Project Reality" — is the first time that the Mountain View, CA company has ever had to produce a machine for home use. It's one thing to successfully develop graphic workstations that cost tens of thousands of dollars, it's quite another to develop the innards of a box that Nintendo swears will sell for "less than \$250."

So how did SGI do the job? What were its goals? Has it achieved them? And just how much of the dream of bringing *Terminator 2's* and *Jurassic Park's* special effects to the home has been sacrificed along the way? **NEXT Generation** met with SGI's George Zachary at Ultra 64's debut at Tokyo's Shoshinkai show to find out.

In the beginning

NG: How did the Ultra 64 project begin for SGI?

George: In July of 1992, SGI developed a \$100,000 graphic development system called the Reality Engine. It's probable that most of the gorgeous SGI demos that you may have seen were developed and are running on Reality Engine.

Then, a guy called Tim Van Hook developed an architecture known as Multimedia Engine, an architecture that could do what the Reality Engine could do in terms of its feature set, but at a lower price point. Tim is a really brilliant guy — he looks like a wizard. This guy is a wizard. So we had this technology kicking about at Silicon Graphics.

NG: That must have been some achievement.

George: Yeah, but it's the nature of our business. We have to do this. Everything's always going to get faster, cheaper, smaller. Evolution doesn't stop.

NG: So how did it end up with Nintendo?

George: Jim Clark — who was the chairman of Silicon Graphics back then — took this technology and really pursued the idea of working with the leading game manufacturers. And out of a process of elimination, we found the best partner to work with.

NG: Sega claims that at one point it turned down Ultra 64 technology.

George: Well, it would be interesting to see if they'd turn it down now.

NG: When was the Ultra 64 contract signed?

George: In August of 1993, and then we started work in September. Our brief was to design and engineer all the internals of the Ultra 64, with the exception of the memory.

NG: What were your goals? What did you agree should be Ultra 64's main strengths?

George: We wanted to get the Reality Engine look and feel, in terms of polygon and the pixel quality, within a high performance machine.

NG: Did analyses of Sega's Saturn and Sony's PlayStation affect the direction in which you took the Ultra 64 project?

George: No, not really. We had a plan of what

we were going to build and we just went out and built the unit.

NG: A lot of people believe that one of the reasons that PlayStation is so successful is that Sony correctly predicted that 3D polygon-based games were the wave of the future — and hence made PlayStation with terrific polygon-power.

Did Nintendo or SGI ever sit down and try to anticipate what gaming trends would emerge over the next three or four years, before starting work on Ultra 64?

George: I think our assumption was that people wanted the next generation of gaming to be built on exploring "virtual worlds." But what is a "virtual world?" If you want to break down what a virtual world is, it's basically an interactive 3D environment in which you control the characters or character, and move them around a 3D space. It also has a lot of realism in it with its visuals.

NG: So what else did you offer Nintendo, in terms of SGI's expertise, in the graphics field?

George: Nintendo would bring in game developers and we would talk to them about what



the architecture is able to do, and what the features would be able to do. As well as designing the hardware, we supply the software emulation system for the Ultra 64. Basically we had Ultra 64 microcode running on a SGI's Reality Engine back in July of 1994. So someone could sit down and start building a game on the Reality Engine. And that's what Mr. [Shigeru] Miyamoto did with *Super Mario 64*. He started building *Super Mario 64* on an Onyx reality engine running an Ultra 64 Software Emulation System over a year ago.

"Project Reality"

NG: Is SGI happy with the final product? Has it matched all your hopes and expectations?

George: Oh definitely. We're definitely excited.

NG: Did the chipset meet Nintendo's requirements?

George: From what I know, absolutely.

NG: So what's under the hood? Obviously the heart and soul of Ultra 64 is a 64-bit CPU working with a custom graphics chip.

George: Yeah, the so-called Reality Co-Processor.

NG: Everyone into videogames has grown wary

talking



"10 years ago the rendering performance of the Ultra 64 would have only been possible on a \$14 million flight simulator"

"SGI's assumption was that people wanted the next generation of gaming to be built on exploring virtual worlds"

of trusting manufacturers' claimed system specs. Is Ultra 64's CPU a true 64-bit chip?

George: Oh yes, absolutely, it's a true 64-bit chip with all 64-bit processing. It has literally — that CPU by itself — Pentium-class performance. And the CPU is used just to calculate the behaviors and the AI and logic of the game. It doesn't touch any of the polygons or pixels or any of the sounds. It's a ton of power for that alone.

NG: And then the graphics processor kicks in...

George: Right. The reality coprocessor is fantastic. The reality coprocessor is also 64-bit in nature, but it has 128-bit processing internally as well. But we didn't go around hyping it as 128-bit — we don't want to get into that ball of confusion. And it calculates in two portions: Half of it is something called the reality signal processor, the other part is called the reality display processor. The reality signal processor is what calculates all the geometry transforms [part of the realtime rendering process]. As a result, a huge, huge advantage that Ultra 64 will have over PCs is that PCs use the CPU to do the geometry transform. That's a huge weakness because then there's nothing left to run the actual game. And on top of it, a general-purpose RISC or CISC CPU is not the right CPU to use to do geometry transform. It's just not the right shape of processor. So we developed a signal processor that's specifically suited to doing matrix multiplication and addition, which is heavily used to do geometry transform in 3D and used to do synthesis and decompression of audio.

NG: That's in comparison to the PC. How does that compare to the custom graphics chips of PlayStation and Sega Saturn?

George: Saturn doesn't have any dedicated geometry transform, right off the bat. PlayStation

has got a 32-bit multiply adder to do geometry transform. It has way lower floating-point operations/second performance. I can't characterize it because first, I can't say what our performance is, and second, the Sony number doesn't really... it's all over the place.

The big difference though is in the second part of the reality coprocessor's function: the fact that we have this thing called the reality display processor (RDP). What the RDP does is kick out all the really cool-looking pixels that you see. It calculates all the color, transparency, Z-buffering and texture mapping info and displays it onto the screen. The big value-adder is it's in the RDP that we do all advanced features, like trilinear interpolation, mip-mapping, Z-buffering, perspective correct textures and the other stuff. Which is completely missing from Sony's hardware.

A fistful of pixels

NG: Let's talk about the hardware features of the Ultra 64. It would seem that it's the way Ultra 64 looks after texture-mapping (the process of "pasting" images, photos, or illustrations onto 3D polygons) that has caused the most excitement among developers.

Ultra 64 has a bunch of graphic features and tools which are part of the hardware. Game developers can use these features "for free." You can turn them on and use them with minimal affect on game speed, right?

George: That's correct. Let's start with anti-aliasing. Anti-aliasing is a good thing because what it does is it smooths out all the jaggies on computer-drawn lines. The reality of TV monitors and computer monitors is that pixels are square, and your eye can see these pixels individually because there aren't enough pixels on a TV screen to overwhelm the resolution of your eye. So what happens is that when you try to draw a diagonal line, or curved line, you get this kind of "stair-



So what's next for Silicon Graphics? Its next job is to help Nintendo manufacture Ultra 64 more cheaply

stepping" thing, which is called aliasing.

Anti-aliasing is a process used to smooth out those jagged edges by computing what the correct color should be along the line and blending that with the adjacent color. The result is that you don't see that stair-stepping effect.

NG: So anti-aliasing doesn't create extra pixels — obviously, that's impossible — but through the clever use of colors it tricks the eye.

George: That's correct. There's a lot of science in doing that. It's an art form, in understanding how people perceive things.

NG: Have gamers seen anti-aliasing before?

George: They won't have. Until now, there's nothing out there that does realtime anti-aliasing, except for the demos on SGI's Reality Engine.

NG: Another hardware feature of Ultra 64 is load management. This is used to prevent "pop up" graphics, or objects suddenly appearing on screen — seemingly out of nowhere — as seen in most 32-bit games so far, like in *Daytona USA* on Saturn. How does load management work?

George: Load management dynamically tunes the graphic pipeline, so you have sustained frame rate. Because you kind of build up "loads" of graphics, it avoids the creation of bottlenecks in the system. Basically, it makes sure that data comes in and goes out at a sustained rate. It works all the way from the CPU, through the reality coprocessor, to memory. So it's kind of a system-wide effect.

NG: What about mip-mapping?

George: What mip-mapping does is generate multiple levels of a texture map. This means that the texture map looks like it was intended to look no matter how close or how far away you see it.

NG: How about Z-buffering?

George: What Z-buffering does is it allows you to assign a polygon or an object a location in 3D space in the Z-dimension, as well as the X- and Y-dimensions. So in a game that includes, let's say, ships and planes, the system can automatically figure out whether the ship is in front of the plane, and so it automatically knows whether it should be drawing the ship or the plane polygons. If you don't have Z-buffering, what you have to do as a developer is create polygon sort lists which tell the system what polygons are visible and which ones aren't from every angle.

NG: And that eats up processing speed.

George: Not only does it eat up processing speed, but the worst thing about not having Z-buffering is that it's really expensive in terms of development time. Without Z-buffering the game creators basically have to figure out what polygons are viewable from what angles — and this can take forever, especially as games increase in complexity. Developers prefer to spend their time creating a game versus figuring out polygon sort lists. And it also leads to problems, because sometimes people have to figure out some angle if things are viewable, and they'll just kinda forget

about it. The result of this is a player will go into part of the game and all of a sudden see stuff that looks kind of whacked, in terms of sort priority, and see things that don't look like they should.

NG: What else does the Ultra 64 do?

George: It also has perspective correct texturing, which basically correctly scales a texture map if it's not parallel with your vision. For example, if there's a billboard that kind of goes off into the distance — say it's on the wall of an alley you are looking down — on Ultra 64 the texture map will be correctly scaled so you don't get any kind of smearing of pixels into the Z-dimension.

Less is sometimes more?

NG: So why include all these features? It would seem that Sony's designers pushed the ability of PlayStation to produce polygons-per-second (with the more polygons the better). But it would seem that SGI regarded raw polygons-per-second performance as a secondary priority.

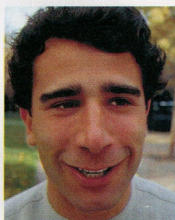
George: The thing that we found is that people don't necessarily react to more polygons, they react to higher-quality texture mapping. That's one of the lessons we learned with the Reality Engine. The workstation before the Reality Engine was known as the VGX. And although the Reality Engine had roughly the same polygon count as the VGX, the big difference was that the Reality Engine processed way more texture-mapped polygons per second, and the texture mapping was of a much higher quality with a higher pixel-fill performance. So it looked completely different. It's a completely different experience — with roughly the same number of polygons.

NG: Another advantage of good texture-mapping is that it reduces the need for high polygon count. Sega's Yu Suzuki commented that one of the reasons that the original *Virtua Fighter* was ever possible on Saturn was that Saturn was able to do with texture-maps what the arcade machine had had to do with very more polygons. The fighters' faces, for example.

George: That's exactly correct. I've seen people draw trees that look realistic with a total of four polygons. And by keeping a low polygon count, you allow for a higher frame rate, and people will respond to frame rate as well.

NG: You've talked about all these graphics features that Ultra 64 has. But why not simply give developers more raw processing power which they can harness the complete power of the machine for their own particular goals?

George: Well, I can tell you this. Let's suppose you just had a generic processor — such as the CPU in a PC — that could run any kind of routine. The raw processing power you would need to pull off mip-mapped pixels that are anti-aliased (like Ultra 64's) is in the vicinity of 10 billion instructions per second. Which is years away from the power that what we're currently



"Ultra 64's reality co-processor has 128-bit internal processing. But we didn't go around hyping it as a 128-bit machine"

talking

"People don't necessarily react to more polygons. They react to higher-quality texture mapping"

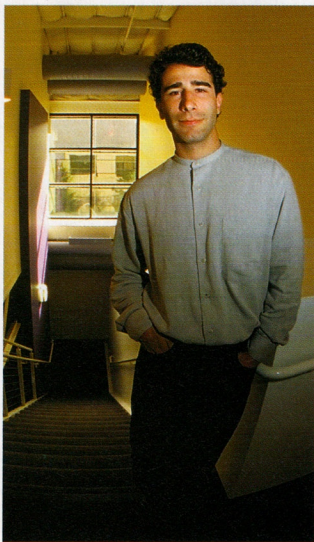
talking about for affordable home systems. Even with the Pentium Pro, Intel is only talking around 250 million instructions per second.

The problem is that a general purpose microprocessor is not the right processor to use for doing graphics. It's great for doing a variety of different things, but not for graphics. Not when you can build a graphics processor that has more power and is less expensive to make.

NG: So how does Ultra 64 compare — in terms of power — to the original SGI Reality Engine from which it was derived?

George: I'd say that from a consumer's perspective, I don't think gamers will be able to tell the difference. I think if you ask someone on the Reality Engine engineering team whether it's the same thing, they'll say "Of course not! The reality engine does blah blah blah."

But since an NTSC TV screen has only a quarter of the pixels compared to a high-end computer monitor, Ultra 64 has an equivalent amount of performance. So although in actual fact Ultra 64 has probably only a quarter of Reality Engine's performance (we haven't actually done direct competitive bench tests), we only have a quarter of the screen to fill. So in terms of polygon count and pixel count, Ultra 64 has the same performance as Reality Engine.



Nintendo's alliance with SGI started back in 1993. It appeared at the time as the ultimate "dream team"

Into the battlefield...

NG: Over the coming years as Ultra 64 battles with PlayStation, Saturn, and maybe M2, what will prove to be Ultra 64's big competitive advantage?

George: My gut feeling is Ultra 64's big advantage will be the kind of graphic features we just talked about. Gamers are going to really react to the right mix that we have of polygons and high-quality pixels. It's kind of similar to engineering a car, which is getting the right mix of chassis design, engine, transmission, and also the driver's interface, which is the cockpit. It's a question of getting the right mix.

NG: Are you threatened by the alleged performance of 3DO's M2?

George: I can tell you a couple things. One is that we receive a constant, steady rate of resumes from the 3DO M2 team, which tells me that things probably aren't so great over there. The second thing is that whereas they might have the right specs on paper, I do not believe they're going to hit those specs. This is based on conversations I've had with people who worked on that team.

NG: So you believe that the M2 specs currently in circulation are merely the team's goals, and not actual specs of the finished, completed project?

George: Yeah, they're goals. Now, I know some of the people who have done some of the work on M2, and they're definitely real good people. But can they achieve really good performance — from a frame rate and polygon rate perspective — and do it in a low-cost chip set? I don't believe they're going to do that.

The cost of success

NG: When trying to predict how successful a game machine will be, it's useful to look at how much it costs to manufacture — as this is the biggest influence on how competitively the system can be sold for. Experts estimate that currently it's costing Sega roughly \$330 to manufacture each Saturn, and PlayStation's weighing in at about \$280 per unit. How does Ultra 64 compare to these?

George: I definitely can't talk about that.

NG: But you believe that the 64-bit Ultra 64 will be able to remain competitive in price with the 32-bit systems?

George: What Nintendo said at Shoshinkai is that it'll definitely be able to bring it to market at or under \$250. But the important thing to remember is that it doesn't have to pay for the CD-ROM mechanism [Ultra 64 doesn't have one] or RAM [for the data to be loaded into].

The biggest sales of videogame systems occur between \$100 and \$150 in the US — that's the impulse-buying range. My belief is that it'll be easier for Nintendo to get down into that range by continuously shrinking the chip (which they did with Super NES and NES before) than it will be for Sony or Sega, because you can't shrink a CD-ROM mechanism.

Developing games

NG: PlayStation is restricting developers to a fairly rigid Operating System [OS]. At the other extreme, developing for Saturn is often described as unnecessarily complicated. How does Ultra 64 compare?

George: We provide Alias and MultiGen tools that are used to create 3D models and texture maps, and people can use other tools as well if they want to. There's a full set of converters available that convert into Ultra 64 data formats to provide all the low-level compilation and linkage routines. We don't supply an OS because an OS is kind of dead in a videogame system as it chews up a lot of performance.

NG: Nintendo claims CD-ROMs are unsuitable for games. But data loaded into RAM from a CD-ROM behaves exactly the same as the ROM found in cartridges, right?

George: I agree. The problem is that you have to have enough RAM...

NG: ...which is expensive. So the only reason that Nintendo doesn't like CD-ROM is because it makes the hardware too expensive, right?

George: I definitely think so. And the interesting thing is the cost curve on RAM is pretty flat for the next three or four years. Demand is going to meet supply, and — from what I hear — the cost of RAM is actually going to go up. In the future I think there are going to be three staple, world requirements: bread, water, and RAM [smiles].

NG: How have you dealt with the problem of not knowing what kind of format games will be stored on? Does it make any difference to Ultra 64 if games come on CD, cartridge, optical disk, via the Internet, or whatever else that Nintendo might have planned?

George: No, we have really high bandwidth interfaces in Ultra 64 which have all kinds of capacity, and essentially, they can handle pretty much any kind of input.

As good as it gets?

NG: Do you think that the games displayed at the Shoshinkai show gave a fair representation of Ultra 64's power?

George: That's a really hard question to answer because I don't know how much better games will be in the future. Looking back historically, we see that three or four years into a system's life, people produce stuff no one thought was possible. It's down to the ingenuity of the game programmers who know how to take advantage of every electron in the box.

NG: Did you personally like what you saw?

George: I thought it was great. And I thought



that Mario 64 looked great.

NG: It did look great, but it really wasn't utilizing all of Ultra 64's graphic features, right? Why was that?

George: The textures were bilinearly interpolated, they weren't trilinearly interpolated — because mip-mapping wasn't turned on in that demo. And anti-aliasing wasn't turned on.

I don't know why, I think they just wanted to have a stable demo to show people. But these features definitely work because we have demos here with that stuff running OK. I think that people completed the nonanti-aliasing, nonmip-mapping versions working first, and so they chose to show these, which they knew would run OK.

Also, the problem with mip-mapping is that you have to generate multiple levels of texture maps. Presumably the developers of the games on show didn't have that time.

NG: No third party games were available for hands-on testing. How do you account for that?

George: I think that's reflective of the fact that developers really need more time on the hardware to take advantage of it. Some of the stuff that was on the videotape was stuff that's really been in development for only four or five months.

NG: So what's next for SGI after finishing the Ultra 64 project?

George: We're just continuing to work with Nintendo to get the system into manufacturing and fine-tuning the manufacturing process. With chip development there's always the quest to get higher and higher yield [getting the same results from smaller, and hence cheaper, chips].

That will keep us busy for the moment...

ng



The development of Ultra 64 at Silicon Graphics' Mountain View, CA-HQ was kept a top secret. A separate, high-security building was where all of the development took place

"Shigeru Miyamoto started building Super Mario 64 on a Software Emulation System over a year ago"

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GTE Entertainment



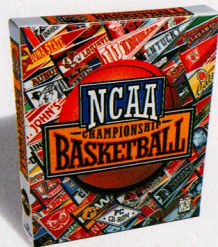
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Ultra 64: Pundits are wary of Nintendo's US Ultra 64 release/**p.14** • **3DO takes a dip:** The 3DO Multiplayer is the second next generation machine to lower its price below \$200/**p.17** • **Bandai's Pippin:** The "all-in-one" console will hit Japanese streets at the end of March/**p.18** • **Virtual I/O hooks up with Sony:** PlayStation may plug in to virtual headset/**p.20**

news

Intelligent new gaming information

Will Ultra 64 launch on April 21?

NEXT Generation doubts Nintendo's ability to meet its target launch date



Rumors persist that Ultra 64s are boxed and ready to go at Nintendo's US HQ, but until the games are ready, the launch has to remain on hold

Nintendo has dated the Japanese launch of Nintendo 64 as April 21. However, the Japanese giant is vague about a US launching date, merely penciling it in loosely as "late April."

Many in the game development community are finding it hard to believe that Ultra 64 will, in fact, be on US store shelves for the spring. They list a number of factors for their pessimism, including the unfinished state of the software, the huge demand in Japan for Ultra 64 which will soak up stocks, and the usual Machiavellian hardware politicking.

Although those developers closest to Nintendo (the so-called Dream Team) are sticking to the official line of a late April launch, others are not so sure. Following the unveiling at Shoshinkai in Japan in November, many developers returned puzzled at the short period of time left to complete various projects. Only two

playable games were shown at Shoshinkai. *Mario 64* was at about 50% completion, while *Kirby Ball* was only 20% complete. All other games were displayed on nonplayable videos.

Naturally, developers are afraid to come out in open criticism of Nintendo. Some are hoping to join the Dream Team and would prefer to keep good relations with Nintendo, while others already enjoy a profitable relationship with the game giant. But all are concerned about the reality of a US launch before the fall.

One developer of highly respected Super NES games noted: "I played *Mario*, which was really impressive. But it was only half-way complete, and it's taken them 18 months to get that far. Can they really do the other half in a couple of months?" Others point out that the machine cannot be launched without *Mario*, and that, in order to hit cartridge manufacturing and factory requirements, the game code would need to be complete by about the time of Valentine's Day (February 14), a desperately short time-frame.

Another developer, based in Europe, pointed out that, "Nintendo has phenomenal manufacturing capabilities. But just about everything they launch in Japan sells out immediately. It's hard to imagine that Ultra 64 won't follow that example, except more so. How can they keep up with that demand and still meet the demand in North America?"

Yet another software "name" commented "I expected to see games that were closer to completion at



The US Ultra 64 joystick will be black, as opposed to Japan's cool gray

"Super Mario 64 is only 50% done, yet it's taken [Nintendo] 18 months to get that far. Can they really finish the game in a couple of months?"

Anonymous Nintendo developer



Nintendo of America's Howard Lincoln is interviewed on page 43



It is the most anticipated system ever, but how long will gamers wait?



On Friday November 24, Nintendo opened its doors to the world's press and showed off Ultra 64 for the first time. The full story starts on page 36

Already here?

The secrecy surrounding all things Ultra 64 has spawned all manner of theories over the past few months. Now, the latest is gaining credence — that a large shipment of Ultra 64s is in the US already. Apparently, in a warehouse on the outskirts of Redmond, WA, thousands of boxes are gathering dust. Each box contains a complete Ultra 64 waiting to be shipped to stores around the country at a moment's notice. NEXT Generation has heard this rumor confirmed by three different sources. And Nintendo hasn't denied the story. When questioned on the subject, a spokesperson smiled and said: "Let's just say we are in very good shape for launch." Why isn't Nintendo moving these machines to consumers? Pundits say it's simply because while the hardware is complete, there are no games to play yet.

Shoshinkai. There's no doubt about the quality of the games, but the timing has to be questioned." Even Wall Street analysts are skeptical. Joseph Osha of Merrill Lynch Japan said, "They'll really have to hustle to make the April deadline." Meanwhile, Nintendo maintains that three games will definitely be ready for launch — although the company doesn't appear to know which three.

One cynical view doing the rounds is that Nintendo has to persuade potential consumers not to give up on Ultra 64. Many would-be Nintendo loyalists are holding off making a hardware purchase until April, yet a further delay may deliver them into the hands of Sony or Sega.

Another possibility that's gaining fashion is that Nintendo decided to hold back on what it showed both to avoid giving away too much to its competition, and to give Mario absolute star status. Nintendo may have feared that coming on too strong too early may have precipitated an aggressive response from Sega or Sony (although aggression levels are pretty much set to max already).

In all likelihood, it's doubtful that Nintendo would have held back any blockbuster purely to avoid repercussions from Sega and Sony. The truth of the matter is that despite the fact that much of the game footage shown was from versions that were four or five weeks out of date, Nintendo is woefully short of finished software. NEXT Generation wouldn't be surprised if the US launch was postponed until September.



Advertainment

The little corner of NEXT Generation that shamelessly devotes itself to showing it as the advertisers show it. This month: Ultra 64

Company: Nintendo

Product: Ultra 64

Date: Nov. 1995

Origin: Japan



The video playing on the show floor of Shoshinkai:

1) A burglar takes a first look round a recently-broken-into house. 2) He plugs in the strange looking box that's attached to the TV. 3) Oddly, he proceeds to expertly demonstrate the features of the Ultra 64 joypad... 4) The analog 360° control... 5) The four-side buttons... 6) The analog control again... 7) An Ultra 64 cartridge... 8) And the memory cards that fit into it. 9) Mario then informs him that it's "Game Over" and he leaves, cartoon-style, via a window. Bizarre.

breaking

32-bit gaming drops in price

Trip Hawkins' 3DO multiplayer drops to \$199. Will Sony and Sega feel obliged to follow?



At \$199, a 3DO system offers great value for the money with some great games like *Blade Force*, *Killing Time*, *BattleSport*, and *Lost Eden*.



3DO's drop to \$199 was expected. Previously, The 3DO Company's refusal to acknowledge that its system couldn't compete equally with PlayStation and Saturn kept prices up

The price of 32-bit gaming has taken a tumble with Goldstar's announcement that its 3DO player would be dropping below the significant \$200 price barrier.

As predicted by **NEXT Generation** (NG 7), the price of the 3DO has come down to \$199 — a full \$100 cheaper than Sony PlayStation or Sega Saturn. The 3DO is the second 32-bit machine to drop below the \$200 dollar threshold. Atari took the dip earlier this year with its struggling Jaguar, now priced at \$149.

Evidence gleaned from videogame stores by **NEXT Generation** suggests that 3DO was simply not proving a popular choice against the more exciting PlayStation and Saturn, even though they were priced at \$50 more with no software. Both 3DO manufacturers (Goldstar and Panasonic) continue to pack their boxes with free goodies such as extra controllers and one or more high-ticket games, such as *Gex* or *FIFA*.

In theory, 3DO will now prove a much more popular purchase at \$199. Goldstar will be banking on people being drawn to 32-bit gaming by the high-profile advertising campaigns of Sony and Sega (see page 68), but who will subsequently opt for the good value of the 3DO

package. In the summer of 1995, with a 3DO player priced at \$299 and Saturn at \$399, The 3DO Company's Carrie Holder was quick to point to sales information that she felt proved her theory that "Sega's Saturn gets them into the store, then we're \$100 cheaper." Will history repeat itself?

Certainly, 3DO's 32-bit system boasts a library of more than 200 games — at least 20 of which are great titles. 3DO is keen to point out that it also offers a 64-bit upgrade path via Matsushita's promised M2 card due in the second half of 1996. The box itself comes with an extra controller worth \$30 and two decent games, *Shock Wave* and *FIFA International Soccer* (worth \$130).

Undoubtedly, many gamers will see this as excellent value, especially if they don't have that extra \$100 for

"All the companies in the 32-bit industry are losing money, so it all depends on how big a stomach [Sega and Sony] have for losses. There is probably no way that they can get to \$199"

Dianne Hunt, The 3DO Company

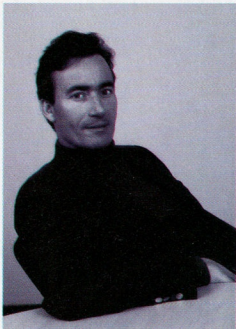


Jaguar has been priced at \$149 since the fall. "We're the discount ticket" says Atari

Sega AM2's 3D Sonic



Word has reached the NEXT Generation offices that Sega AM2 is working on a polygon-based coin-op starring none other than Sonic the Hedgehog and his sometime-sidekick Tails



As The 3DO Company moves toward multi-format game development, the original 3DO player's future is in doubt

the newer 32-bit systems. Goldstar's Garth Bradley explained: "The cost of development has continued to drop and there was the space to move and take this step. This basically allows Goldstar to get a competitive edge."

However, 3DO's rivals are interpreting this latest move as evidence that 3DOs are not selling very well. Bradley denied this but admitted that there was a "strong demand" from store owners to drop

the price, indicating that there are a lot of 3DOs left warming the shelves of game stores across the country.

Sega's marketing Vice President Neil Cohen commented: "This is a close-out strategy. They want to blow the product off the shelves with a view to clearing out inventory for whatever else they have coming down the line."

Asked whether he agreed that this new offer represents good value to consumers, he said: "It would be better to invest in a system that's growing as opposed to one that's closing out. Buyers will realize this."

The 3DO Company's Diane Hunt hit back: "The fact is that the 32-bit market is not as robust as many people expected. By the end of this year we expect the 32-bit industry across all three major companies to be only about a million units in the US and that would mean 350,000 to Sony, 300,000 to 3DO, and the rest to Sega. It's all going to be reasonably close in range to each other."

"But I think it's incredible news for the consumer who can buy a great 32-bit system with two award-winning titles that are valued at \$130 and a free controller valued at \$30 with the library of more than 200 titles."

3DO is likely to be continuously ringing in the demise of the 32-bit generation over the next six months. The firm will be seeking to pave the way for Matsushita's M2 machine, the success of which is of enormous importance to Trip Hawkins' outfit.

So does this mean price cuts for the other systems as well? "All the companies in the 32-bit industry are losing money, so it all depends on how big a stomach the other companies have for losses," Hunt commented. "There is probably no way that Sega and Sony can get to \$199, 3DO has been the price leader in this industry and that's got to hurt them."

Meanwhile, The 3DO Company's avowed intention to expand its development resources has borne fruit following the acquisition of Cyclone Studios. Cyclone's first games released through Studio 3DO will be *Captain Quasar* and *Battlesport*. The former is an action shooter while the latter is an excellent, fast-action *Cyber Sled* meets ice hockey-fest.

The 3DO Company has recently shifted resources toward software development following the \$100 million sale of its M2 technology to Matsushita. Cyclone will be working on future 3DO development as well as M2 and PC software.

i wish...



Randy Breen, EA

"Game machines were as common as VCRs. More machines in homes would allow a wider variety of content."

- That people's image of computer and video gamers wasn't that of nerdy pubescent boys.
- Broadband network support in homes wasn't so far away. While you sit it, make it inexpensive. It's not worth supporting if few can afford to use it.
- Games would become history. If you can't figure it out by using it, what's the point of making it interactive?

"Game creation wasn't platform specific. I've looked but I haven't found an emulation mode switch on a single game machine."

- Someone would finally re-think the game

Randy Breen is the executive producer of the *Road Rash* series and the upcoming *ShredFest* from EA

What is it?

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"This is a close-out strategy [for 3DO]. They want to blow the product off the shelves with a view to clearing out inventory"

Neil Cohen, Sega of America

ng

breaking

Pippin Japanese launch planned

But who will bring the Macintosh-based game console to the US?

It is...

<http://www.next-generation.com/ng> is NEXT Generation's address on the WWW. Stop there for your daily news service dedicated entirely to videogames and to the game industry.



The Motorola PowerPC technology, at the heart of Pippin, offers flexibility

Although Bandai's is the first machine based on Apple's Pippin technology, two more licensees have Pippin machines in the works. They may bring the machine to the US in 1996

Bandai is putting the finishing touches to its Apple Macintosh-based Pippin system, which will be launched in Japan on March 31. It had been scheduled in for release last fall.

Meanwhile, Apple maintains that two more manufacturers have signed up to make and market Pippin machines. Apple refuses to talk about the deals, arguing that it is up to the two licensees to make their announcements when they see fit. While Bandai has huge ambitions for Pippin in Japan, it has kept extremely quiet on this side of the Pacific. A spokesman for its US office simply said that, "there is no structure here as yet for an American launch of Pippin." Given the nature of the

product, Bandai may prefer to see how Pippin fares in Japan before embarking on an expensive US adventure. Also, one or both of the possible licensees may be concentrating on the US.

Bandai Japan appears to have modified its own vision of Pippin since it announced the project 14 months ago. The unit will now be presented as a combined game console, CD multimedia player, and Internet provider. Other PC manufacturers are also looking at manufacturing low-cost PCs which can do little more than browse the Internet, and this will not have escaped Bandai's notice.

Pippin will launch with 10 titles, including educational and multimedia titles and, somewhat ominously, it will also produce a videogame based on Bandai's Power Rangers license.

Apple won't launch a machine. It simply intends to license the stripped-down Mac technology to as many takers as possible, thereby seeding the OS in much the same way 3DO did. But with only one announced license in the first full year, and no unit in the US for the near future, Pippin is still seen as a fringe player.

Pippin Tech Specs

- 66 MHz PowerPC 603 RISC Microprocessor
- 64-bit architecture
- Superscaler, 3 instructions/clock cycle,
- 8 KByte data and 8 KByte instruction caches
- IEEE standard single & double precision floating-point Unit
- 6 MB combined system & video memory, advanced architecture
- 4X CD-ROM drive
- Memory cards
- 1, 2, 4, and 8 MB increments
- 4 MB ROM
- NVRAM Store/Restore Backup
- 8-bit and 16-bit video support
- Dual Frame Buffers for superior frame-to-frame animation
- Support for NTSC & PAL composite, S-Video and VGA (640x480)
- Up to 16.7 Million colors
- Dual stereo 16-bit "CD quality" output



Bandai's "boomerang" controller doesn't inspire absolute confidence, although design improvements are said to have been made

ng

Flamin' Yawn trashed my house.
Psycrew stole my lady.
I've got a backpack full of snatt.

This ain't gonna be no picnic.

EARTHWORM JIM



<http://www.playmatestoys.com>

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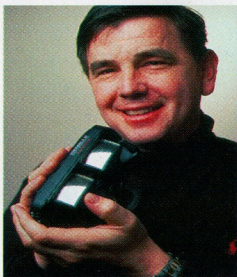
PlayStation immersive headset planned

Sony hooks up with Virtual I/O for an immersive headset due for release in March

Sony is teaming up with Virtual I-O, inventor of the i-glasses unit for the PC, to develop a low-cost, immersive video unit similar in design to a Virtual Reality headset. Neither company is ready to talk yet, although **NEXT Generation** has secured salient details about the project. The head-mounted display unit will be based entirely on the already available PC product which went on sale earlier this year. That worked effectively as two monitor goggles placed close to the player's eyes.

The company promises that the effect is akin to playing on "an 80-inch monitor." Not surprisingly, prior to the PC i-glasses launch, many industry critics felt that such a project would work badly. However, after launch it secured warm reviews in the PC and general game press and has enjoyed commercial success.

Sony, not a company easily impressed with hardware or peripheral innovations, is in discussions with Virtual I/O and is inspecting prototypes which have been developed over the past few months. One decision yet to be made is whether or not to launch a higher-priced version of the headset which would incorporate basic head-tracking technology. This works in much the same fashion as a view button on your controller, except that left, right, pitch, and yaw views are made by movements of the head.



Not to be confused with virtual reality, the headset in development for PlayStation simply provides a handy alternative to a regular TV

NEC/Namco PC Deal

NEC Corporation and Namco have announced an alliance to bring realistic 3D computer graphics to PCs running Windows 95. NEC will produce its PowerVR chipsets and Namco will develop the games to exploit them. PowerVR is a revolutionary 3D chipset that will provide 3D graphics of a quality superior to those available on 32-bit consoles. A single chipset can run at 200,000 polygons per second. Namco is planning to use the chip to produce games like Tekken, Rave Racer, and Air Combat 22 on the PC.



Light, comfortable, and mimicking an 80-inch TV, Virtual I/O's headset is perfect for portable gaming. It's a shame PlayStation needs a socket...

That technology, while not especially ground-breaking, could add an extra \$400 to the price of the headset, something to which Sony is bound to object. It is aiming for a price no higher than that of the original machine — \$299.

Sony is also insisting that the product be exclusive to PlayStation and will be involved in designing the casing so that it fits in with the much admired PlayStation "look."

A spokesman for Virtual I/O commented: "We're not really ready to talk about this just yet, but it is true that we are talking to Sony, and that we will be releasing something between now and April."

ng

Virtual I/O promises that the effect is akin to playing games on an 80-inch monitor

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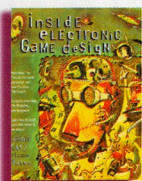
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PHILIPS

Essential reading

Inside Electronic Game Design



Arnie Katz and Laurie Yates
Publisher: Prima Publishing
\$24.95 ISBN: 1-55958-669-9
276 pages

There really hasn't been a more timely guide for the game industry than *Inside Electronic Game Design*.

The writing style is elegant and informative without the pedantic tick of your classic junior-year civics professor, and the book's aim meets

its target dead-on. Arnie Katz and Laurie Yates have dug into the heart of game design, mining all of the most essential elements out for auteur, newbie, and hobbyist: Beginning with the theory of game design (starting with *Space War*), we are led through the golden age to the great crash to the dream and the risk of producing a game, to interviews with modern day designers, to thorough descriptions of what jobs are available and how to get them (the most asked question ever).

Just don't be fooled by the curious Meet the Designers section, a narrowly focused window into the industry's designers which skips major Japanese wizards like Shigeru Miyamoto (creator of *Mario*) and Yu Suzuki (*Virtua Fighter 2*). Other than that oddity, this is a book highly recommended.

Being Digital



Nicolas Negroponte
Publisher: Alfred A Knopf Inc.
\$12 ISBN: 0-679-43919-6
243 pages

Obviously written in short, random chunks — and then pasted together — *Being Digital* nevertheless manages to predict, de-mystify and in places guide the so-called "digital revolution", without its spell over the reader ever being broken. Get stuck into *Being Digital*, and you will

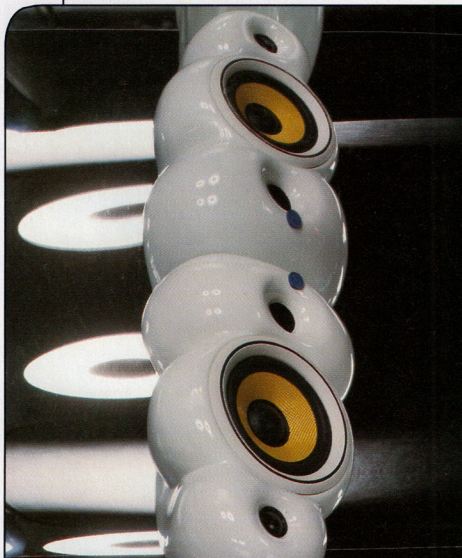
believe. Grasp the fundamental difference between atoms and bits (these words are made up of bits, the paper they are printed on is made of atoms), and then everything falls into place. All of a sudden the "information superhighway" seems more than simply a faster way for geeks to work out that they have nothing to say to each other, and you'll despair at the stupidity of your television set. Really.

If brains were dynamite, Nicolas Negroponte would certainly have enough to blow his hat off. As an evangelist for technology, and co-founder of MIT's Media Lab, all the ground covered in *Being Digital* is familiar territory to Negroponte, and yet he manages to communicate this in laymans terms that all can understand. We all enjoyed *Being Digital*. You will too.

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movers & shakers

ATARI SHIFTING FOCUS — 50% OF ENERGY GOING TO PC SOFTWARE

NEWSLINE: At the Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas this January, Atari announced that it is refocusing its energies to focus on both its Jaguar and the personal computer. Atari will divide its Jaguar and PC efforts 50/50, said Ted Hoff, North American vice president of operations with Atari.



Atari has not entirely given up on the Jaguar, and it will still push the 64-bit console into the next year

BOTTOMLINE: Rumors have been surrounding Atari for more than a month now that the company will abandon Jaguar entirely. Hoff says this is not the case, the company will continue to support Jaguar

but the PC will have equal standing in Atari's book. In addition, the company will develop for Macintosh, PlayStation, and Saturn.

The PC rules. Atari's move follows the footsteps of Sega and The 3DO Company, which have both in the past several months acknowledged the growth of the PC and its power and potential to deliver high performance videogaming. Plus, the PC has just got an installed base that no 32-bit machine can touch.

SPECTRUM INVESTS \$2.5 MILLION IN TEN

NEWSLINE: Spectrum Holobyte Inc. made an equity investment of \$2.5 million in The Total Entertainment Network (TEN).

BOTTOMLINE: TEN came to Spectrum with the goal of securing content for its entertainment online service and walked away with that and \$2.5 million. We liked what they were doing, say Spectrum officials. Also part of the deal — TEN also purchased a proprietary networking development tool for \$750,000 cash. Spectrum itself has been the subject of takeover rumors (again), but insiders say that ain't the case.

A monthly look at business news affecting the gaming world

by Christopher Sherman

3DO ACQUIRES CYCLONE

NEWSLINE: The 3DO company acquired the assets of Cyclone Studios, an action and arcade game developer, for cash, common stock and other interests.

BOTTOMLINE: It wasn't by mistake that 3DO's first acquisition since its sale of its M2 technology to Matsushita is designed to pump up Studio 3DO, the company's software arm. The move continues the diversification of The 3DO Company, the once-only licensor of gaming technology, into a software development house. As one pundit told NEXT Generation, Trip [Hawkins] is moving back into the business he knows best — software. Hawkins, the founder of 3DO, was of course a founder of Electronic Arts. Cyclone, which will operate as an independent unit of Studio 3DO, will dedicate its efforts to developing for the 3DO platform, the yet-to-be released 3DO M2 and the PC.

SIERRA ACQUIRES PAPYRUS, SUBLOGIC; BOLSTERS SIM LIBRARY



In the year of acquisitions, Sierra On-Line has bought out Papyrus, the makers of *NASCAR Racing*

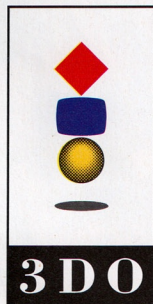
NEWSLINE: Sierra On-Line Inc. acquired Papyrus Design Group Inc., developers of *NASCAR Racing* and *Indy Car Racing*, and subsequently all the assets of flight sim developer Sub Logic.

BOTTOMLINE: Industry consolidation continues. The larger the title library controlled by vendors, the better

positioned they are when dealing with retailers. Sierra has been on an acquisition path for many months now, gobbling up minor home developers as well as larger operations. While Sierra is diversifying, insiders tell NEXT Generation videogames are still the number one priority. However, at least in 1996, Sierra doesn't plan to place any big bets or development dollars behind next generation videogames. Sierra will focus on the PC in 1996, and expects to release more than 60 titles next year.



Christopher V. Sherman is the publisher of MMWIRE, the leading daily news service on the business of interactive entertainment. MMWIRE ONLINE can be found at <http://www.mmwire.com>



Trip Hawkins is moving back into the business he knows best — software

mission: DEADLY SKIES™


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PC CD-ROM



 **SEGA SATURN**



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JOYRIDING

Where are the women in cyberspace?

During the spring of 1982, I received word that I was accepted into Columbia University. I was pretty happy. But that summer, I learned a shocking fact — Columbia College was an all-male institution. Needless to say, my freshman year was full of young men staring wistfully across Broadway at Barnard College, an all-female school; or, staring at the late night Robin Byrd show on public access cable. Next year, Columbia admitted its first co-ed class, and has never looked back.

So where are the women in cyberspace? Actually, there are plenty of women online. They're all over the Internet, participating in all different ways. Stacy Horn founded Echo in New York City, an electronic salon where users range from Phiber Optik (hacker and phone phreak recently released from the Federal pen) to Lou Reed. Echo encourages women members by providing women-only areas as well as discounted rates for women signups.

A more accurate question would be why aren't any women playing games online. It seems men are overwhelmingly the market for computer games. A few games cross over to a more balanced audience, like *Myst* and *Tetris*, but who plays *Doom*? Men. *Virtua Fighter*? Men. (In fact, console gamers are even younger and even more male.) Why is this?

Look online. There are more women playing computer games online than you think; they're not playing all the different varieties of online games. According to Genie, there are more women playing games like *Gemstone*, where the old-fashioned text interface enables nearly infinite flexibility to a multiplayer role-playing game, just like the familiar pen and paper *Dungeons & Dragons* campaigns. Women seem to like the cooperative and social aspect of these games, while men seem to enjoy blowing things up and killing their enemies in Rambo-like quantities.

Women will play computer games,

it seems, but they seem to prefer games with cooperation and interaction, like role-playing games such as *Betrayal at Krondor*, *System Shock*, or *Crusaders of the Dark Savant*, with a strong story element and defined characters. According to Heidi Danglemeier, a former Sega game analyst and now head of Hi-D, a small development group in hip Tribeca, NY, the male-driven game development community has ignored the women's market. Bad business, according to Danglemeier. "Why else would they resist those 0.5-plus billion 4 to 12 aged girls (if you tally in Western Europe and Mexico) who have equal buying power to boys and so few products that coincide with their interests?" Companies have not made the effort to understand the market, but are instead satisfied with their existing male buyers, she concludes.

According to Danglemeier's research, women are more interested in the communication aspect of games. Solitaire and computer games aside, playing means getting together with people — at a bridge table, bowling alley, or basketball court. "You can implement your product very fast on the Internet. It emphasizes human solutions, like interaction, rather than technical solutions — more graphics and video," explains Danglemeier. "Curiosity and friendship is a motivation that needs to be addressed by women's games," she continues.

Men and women differ, according to Danglemeier, in motivation for recreation; women are more interested in expressing themselves creatively. Some of Hi-D's efforts are not games in the traditional sense, but are just means of interacting for pleasure, things that enhance human bonds. A few games in development are "genre-busting" according to Hi-D, and create an ongoing experience involving lots of people. American Laser Games has just launched its own division, Her



Bernard Yee is a free-lance writer and author of books on PC games. He visits unusual sites regularly, but (lets face it), he plays lots of online games

by Bernard Yee

Interactive, which is to develop games for young girls.

Essentially, a lot of people, women in particular, don't like the content of what's online, and are waiting for new sites to appear to suit their interests. "Lots of men feel the same way," says Danglemeier. "They're not satisfied with what's out there." Stop by her interactive at <http://algames.com> for inside info on McKenzie & Co., its first girls game, and Hi-D's web site at <http://www.hi-d.com> to see what these Tribeca developers are up to — you may find yourself just a bit less interested in kicking online butt.

You may end up opening your horizons just a bit.



Web sites of the Month

There's so many web sites, full of fluff and marketing PR, nice but ultimately superfluous graphics that test your patience on a 28.8K bps line, that I'm amazed when I see one that's interesting and deep. A New York filmmaker has put together a film called *Synthetic Pleasures*, and is on a quest to make environments that suit us, including virtual reality, cybersex, body mutilation, and genetic manipulation. This web page is stocked with must-see data on cyberpunk culture. Check it out at (<http://www.panic.com/~liaosp/>) — it is, by far, one of the best sites I've encountered yet, and it has very good links.

Make your Pentium run like an 8-bit 6502? In the great Modernist tradition, what's old is new when you visit Digital Nostalgia (<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sloane/games.html>) and download an Apple II emulator for your PC. And, best of all, you can download classic games like *Choplifter*, Sierra's first graphic adventure *Mystery House*, and the all-time great *Apple Panic* — and play them, in their original glory, on Windows 3.1 or Windows 95.

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Arcadia

Inside news analysis on the coin-op battlegrounds



Marcus Webb is the editor-in-chief of *RePlay* magazine, the US' leading trade amusement magazine

by Marcus Webb



Namco's involvement in the US arcade business looks set to grow...

Arcade Industry Hits Bottom

Since the middle of 1994, the American arcade industry has been suffering its worst slump since the great coin-op video crash of 1983. And while the slide may have bottomed out, there's no evidence that any revolutionary improvement will come along soon. Gamers are not visiting arcades in any way, shape, or form like the numbers they used to, nor are they spending as much when they do visit. So arcade income is way down, while overhead (cost of games, labor, real estate, etc.) is higher. Arcade owners say income is down anywhere from 15% to 50% compared to 1993.

Fallout from this weak market is all over the place. One of the US' largest arcade chains — 125 fun centers operating under the names Time Out, Space Port, and Exhilarama — entered Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection just last November. So did the chain's parent company, retail giant, but then Edison put the arcade chain up for sale!

As this column goes to press, Namco America and Namco Operations Inc. says it is "vigorously pursuing" a possible purchase of the Edison Brothers' arcade chain. By the time you read this, in fact, a deal may have been closed. Namco was already the US' largest arcade chain owner, so if it does buy the Edison arcade chain, it will put the company incredibly far ahead of the rest of the field.

More evidence of trouble in arcadia: several more of the US' very largest arcade chains are either up for sale, have been sold, or are thinking about running for financial cover in various ways, including walking away from certain less-profitable sites. At a recent trade show for arcade owners, one of the best-attended seminars was called "Beating Sophomore Slump." Why? Many of the new "family entertainment centers" (big arcades which also have redemption skill games, batting cages, go-karts, mini-golf, bumper cars, etc.) have run into serious trouble. Experts also say

somewhere between 15% and 30% of existing family entertainment centers are closing their doors at any given time, and the number of closures is only expected to rise.

Game Makers Exit the Arcades

Tough times in the arcades means slower sales for manufacturers. Some factories are pulling back, or even dropping out altogether. American Laser Games ended its direct manufacturing participation in the coin-op market last November. However, it will license game software and hardware for arcade sales by other factories. Also reacting to tough times, Taito America has decided to end its direct sales and marketing participation in the US arcade market. Taito is one of the oldest and largest Japanese videogame manufacturers: the company created the classic *Asteroids* game during the first arcade boom of 1981, and it still owns one of Japan's biggest arcade chain operations. But from now on, Taito says it will let a local agent handle its coin-op game sales to the US.

Three-Dimensional Graphics

California-based 3Dfx Interactive will supply high-powered new chips to Data East and Jaleco for use in future coin-operated products. Both firms are set to launch new games with the so-called "Voodoo" chips in early 1996. Games will feature advanced texture-mapping plus "per-pixel" special effects like fog, translucency, transparency, and new lighting techniques.

Sega Cybermalls

While traditional arcades are hurting from fewer customers who're spending less spending, a new and much larger type of fun center seems to be flourishing. You can call them "location-based entertainment" or "cybermalls" (family entertainment centers, like Goldfand, are too small) but by whatever name, these giant complexes are 100% dedicated to entertainment.

Latest example of this fast-growing trend: a \$27 million site called "The Spectrum" is now open in Irvine, CA. It boasts a 30-screen cineplex, upscale coffeehouse, restaurants, a mega-bookstore...and it will include an IMAX theater plus an elaborate, Sega-owned supercade that'll include lots of its own top sims and some Virtuality VR units. The whole thing will resemble Sega's 27,000 sq. ft. center in Seattle's "Meridian" cybermall, which Arcadia reported last month. The successful prototype for these cybermalls is the Universal Citywalk complex in Los Angeles. And we hear a giant Sega center could someday open there, too! (Sega's just entered into a joint venture with Universal's parent, MCA.)

Virtual Winners

The world's leading maker of immersive virtual reality games, Virtuality, Inc., is unleashing a torrent of creativity in hardware and software these days, having abandoned its plans to produce a HMD device for Jaguar with Atari.

Three target shooting games are available for its new "Total Recoil" system, which features a realistic Model 101 shotgun from the Winchester rifle company. The pneumatic gun gives a real, physical kickback when you fire it. "Total Recoil" won the "Best New VR Product" award at the 1995 trade show for the International Assn. of Amusement Parks and Attractions.



...despite the fact that the number of people visiting arcades is falling



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Generator

by Mark James Ramshaw

Hardwired into industry opinions and events, Generator turns its eyes toward future software gems in this year's lineup



Putting aside the surveillance equipment, the rumour and opinion-polling, I have collected an unusual whistletop tour of next year's more weird and interesting gaming releases.

The most unusual product of the year is Time Warner's *Organ Art*, a 3D image generator for the PC. More of a screen saver for the rave music generation than a genuine game, this leisuware comes from renowned computer artist William Latham and promises to give users the power to create mutating 3D art, or let the machine create its own. The visuals it produces are nothing short of amazing.

In a more instant gratification vein, Virgin's provisionally titled *Rally* sounds like it has the potential to go beyond mere coin-op copying. "It's got a 3D world unlike any other," boasts Stephane Koenig of developers King Of The Jungle. Thanks to the use of kinematics, Koenig claims, "everything is calculated realistically right down to turning circles. Tires move in sync with the ground, and even if cars lose a wheel they behave just as they would in real life." This realism, and the promise of perspective-correct texturing as well as highly detailed graphic elements gives the game's cars an amazing look and feel. This will show up on the Windows 95.

Sticking to the unusual, *Gremlin's Realm Of The Haunting* is its most expensive and ambitious project to date. This may initially look like a Doom pretender, but, in fact, *Realms* promises to mix of puzzling, FMV sequences, and 3D exploration much more seamlessly than *The 11th Hour*. "We're trying to create a true horror game," explains Tony Crowther, the game's lead programmer. Watch out also for *Hardwars*, a science-fiction 3D blaster from the *Slipstream 5000* team, Software Refinery and Gremlin Interactive.

Meanwhile, back at Looking Glass Technologies, work is already well underway on *Flight Unlimited 2*. If you thought the first title pushed back the boundaries of gaming, just wait until you see this one. "Graphically, we're taking what we've learned so far and pushing it much further," Designer Con Hantzopoulos reveals. "We're working really hard on the ground detail right now, so expect to see hangers, airfields, buildings, even large monuments. We want to get the Statue Of Liberty in there, all lit up." Don't be too surprised to see a Spitfire in amongst the choice of planes this time around, either, though no combat is planned (that's being saved for *Flight Combat*, due in '97).

Rounding up our fleeting look at next year's most unusual titles, keep a look out for Maxis' *Mindwarper*, its first entry into the 3D blasting genre, albeit with loads of great ideas and artificial intelligence routines.

The most intriguing of all may be as LucasArts' *Afterlife*. Best described as "SimDead," this is the latest twisted creation from Sam & Max co-author Mike Stemmler. "It's in the vein of a 'Sim' game," says Stemmler, "but it takes the whole theme and twists it on its ear. The player is charged with managing the afterlife, and looking after souls as they make their way to heaven or hell." Angels, devils, atrocious puns, and genuine management-based gameplay are promised in a game which LucasArts' Tom Sarris describes as "the last word in 'Sim' games. Literally."

Mark James Ramshaw is free-lance journalist, and a software designer and producer who writes regularly for far too many videogame and music magazines

Datebook

February

Web Seminars February 6 to 7, 1996 in Chicago, IL. This exhibition is open to the public and introduces use of Mosaic, doing business on the Internet, development of home pages, online gaming, firewalls, etc. For more info call (800) 632-5537. Open to the public.

MILIA '96 takes place from February 9 to 12, 1996 in the Palais Des Festivals, Cannes, France. An international convergence of publishers and multimedia companies, MILIA will give awards for excellence in publishing, as well as hold forums, exhibits, etc. Contact Trish Nicolas at (404) 897-2300, ext. 336. Open to the public.

The eighth **Networks Expo Boston** lands in the Hynes Veterans Memorial Convention Center, Boston, MA, February 13 to 15 and will present new software and hardware solutions for future Internet business, networking, and Web pages. Open to the public. Contact the Blenheim Group at (801) 655-8024 for more information.

March

Intermedia World convenes on March 5 to 7, 1996. This show is open to the public and is set up to address the needs of developers, technologists, educators, and pros from the computer, entertainment, information, and communications industries. Call (203) 840-5834.

The **ACME (American Coin Machine Exhibition)**, is the annual amusement and coin-op show sponsored by AAMA, held March 7 through 9, at the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. For exhibitor, attendee, or accommodations information, please contact William T. Glasgow, Inc. at (708) 333-9292. Not open to the public.

April

The first annual **I-Magic Awards Festival** will be held this April 17 through 18, at the New York Information Technology Center, NY, NY. This event provides achievement awards for excellence in consumer relevant categories including those most important: playing games and the World Wide Web. Contact Bonnie Harper for more information at (212) 431-8923 or <http://imagic-festival.com>.

WinHEC'96 (Microsoft Windows Hardware Engineering Conference) will appear on April 1 through 2 at the San Jose Convention Center and will feature discussions on new initiatives and standards, and look at the latest and hottest software, and more. Call (612) 550-6390 for more information. Not open to the public.

Orlando Consumer Electronics Show '96 will occur from May 23 to 25 at the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Fla. Complete with all types of electronics from games to telephones to Internet gadgets, and more, the Orlando CES is open to the public and should be attended. To get more information send a FAX: (703) 907-7690.

SHOW ORGANIZERS: If your show isn't listed here, it's because you haven't told us about it. Call (415) 696-1688, or FAX information to (415) 696-1678, or send details to DATEBOOK, **NEXT Generation**, 1350 Old Bayshore Highway, Suite 210, Burlingame, CA 94010.
NOTE: All *Behind the Scenes at Sega* books have been sent! Call Prima Publishing to order the book directly at (916) 632-4400.

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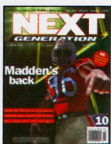
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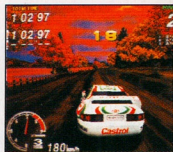
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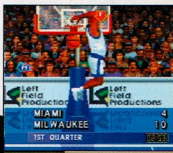
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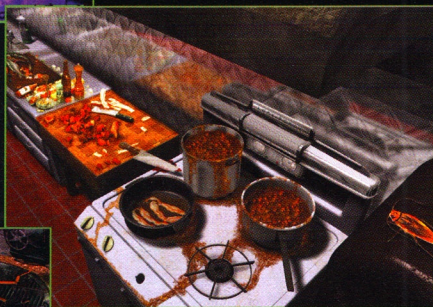
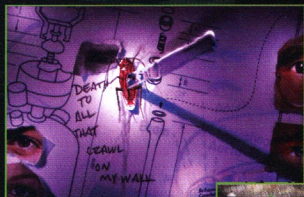
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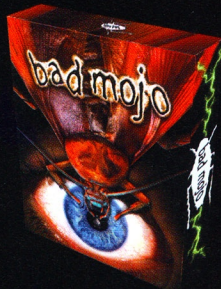
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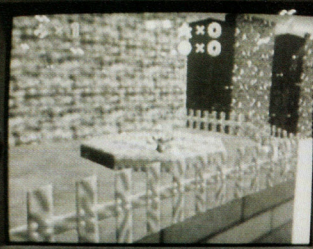
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Ultra 64: Nintendo's shot at the title

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初回

Businessmen, members of the press, school kids, world-famous game designers, Nintendo officials, and yes — even a smuggled-in Sony executive — lined up to witness Ultra 64 for the first time at Shoshinkai

Late in November, Nintendo unveiled Ultra 64 at Tokyo's Shoshinkai exhibition. Despite rumors to the contrary, the system's debut posed more questions than it answered.

NEXT Generation reports



On the morning of Friday November 24, delegates entering Nintendo's Shoshinkai exhibition were sure of only three things:

1) Mario was the most significant game character of the 1980s, and yet remains Nintendo's most treasured and valuable intellectual property. 2) Shigeru Miyamoto is — without question — the world's finest game creator. 3) Nintendo is the most secretive company in the business of making videogames. If secrets were cash then a Nintendo car wouldn't just stop on a dime, it would be sure to pick it up.

Eight hours later, after leaving the show, not many people were considerably wiser. Nintendo adamantly refused to let any Ultra 64 information slip over and above the bare minimum (even the third party game producers were shackled by nondisclosure agreements). For many, the only

comfort came in seeing some of the world's finest and most high-profile game developers themselves witnessing Ultra 64 for the very first time — at least it seems that Nintendo is democratic in its tight-lipped policies. Indeed, at around lunchtime of the first day, many delegates were citing the following reasons for an overall feeling of disappointment:

First, having been promised 10 playable titles, the revelation that there were in fact only one and a half games available for hands-on testing (*Kirby Ball 64* doesn't come close to *Super Mario 64*) was a big letdown.

Second, any hopes that Nintendo would clear up the data-storage question were dashed. It's common knowledge that Nintendo is working on some readable/writeable alternative to

CD-ROM, but Mr. Yamauchi (Nintendo Corp's chairman) refused to let any real news slip. He simply stated that "Nintendo intends to provide a large capacity, high-speed peripheral that not only reads data, but writes it in as well. At [1996's] Shoshinkai exposition, this new media should be introduced." He did, however, go on to mention that *The Legend of Zelda 64* and *Dragon Quest VII*



Leaving Shoshinkai after day one, delegates were impressed, but wanted to know more

featuring U64



Nintendo intends for Ultra 64's joypad to be held in three different ways, depending upon the style of game being played (far left). Any color you like — even if it's black. The U64 pad comes in eight different colors, although it is believed that matte gray will be the color-of-choice for the US launch (above). Up to four pads can be connected simultaneously (*Bombberman* ahoy! — lower left). Memory cartridges will plug into the base of the controller, Virtual Boy style (above left). One last finger button (left)

The Ultra 64 Joypad

Technology never stops improving. And yet while game graphics are continually pushed forward not just with each new hardware

platform, but often with each new software release, some ingredients of the gaming mix are beginning to taste a little stale. The good old fashioned eight-way joypad (no matter how many different buttons you stick on it) has remained woefully unimproved since the dawn of gaming. And it needs to be reinvented.

In **NG 12** Chris Crawford argued that a game should be judged on not what a player sees or hears, but on what he gets to do. And what he gets to do is a measure of how many "verbs" — or the extent of the vocabulary — that make up the communication between the player and the software.

The trouble with conventional joypads (3DO's, Jaguar's, Saturn's, and PlayStation's included) is that they chronically restrict this communication in two fundamental ways. First, the directional controller only understands

up, down, left, or right. Including diagonals, this results in just eight possible directions. Imagine trying to drive a real car only able to lock the steering wheel into eight preset positions, and it's easy to see the artificial ceiling game developers often hit in trying to create realistic sims.

Second, the directional pad only understands "on" or "off." Sure, gamers have got used to the "tap turns" of *Daytona USA* and *Ridge Racer* (quickly tapping the directional control to ease around a gentle turn) but it's wrong that the graphics should offer us so much realism and the joypad so little.

Ultra 64's joypad solves many of these problems. Its major new feature and competitive advantage is the central thumb stick. Although it outputs digital data, it's analog in nature. At Shoshinkai, Nintendo representatives claimed that the joypad can detect 360 independent directions. Obviously, game programmers then have to implement 360° of freedom into their software — which may not be practical — but the potential is there if they need it. It can also detect degrees of movement —

A revolution in game control is long overdue. Nintendo claims that its Ultra 64 pad delivers

soft, medium, or hard right, for example.

The pad uses a grid of 127x127 to detect degrees of movement — a revolutionary advance beyond the simple "on or off" binary interpretation of conventional joypads.

Of course, the Ultra 64 pad also features a wide variety of conventional buttons (see illustrations) as well as room for a memory card in the base. The standard US pad will be black, although Nintendo was keen to show a display case full of multicolored joypads (GameBoy style) at the show. **NEXT Generation** met with Genyo Takeda, general manager R&D3, Nintendo Corporate Ltd. and the brains behind the Ultra 64 joypad.

NG: How did the Ultra 64 project begin for you?

Mr. Takeda: We sent several engineers to SGI. We worked together to determine what was needed for video-games and what type of architecture



was needed. When we finalized the baseline design, we intended to try and design many control devices.

NG: What ideas did you have in the design of the Ultra 64 joypad?

Mr. Takeda: I have to tell you that the design was made by my team's [R&D3] mechanical engineer. But I encouraged them to try to think about new ideas — you know, Nintendo is not asking for a standard controller. At each project, with NES and Super NES, Nintendo sets new standards for controllers. So this was my message for my mechanical engineers and industrial designers.

NG: How did the final design for the joypad come about?

Mr. Takeda: We tried many different types of ideas and tested prototypes and we threw them away. We became more and more ambitious.

We tried a motion sensor wristwatch (we've made a prototype and have applied for a patent already). Everything was good, but players like kids who don't understand the internal mechanism had trouble controlling it, so we abandoned it.

There are three types of directional devices on this controller. One is a cross-key: it's the conventional device Nintendo invented for the Game & Watch. Many people tell me it's kind of a common sense to use. We could not give it up as today's players are stubborn, [they want to] use the cross-key. The C-Button unit is for directional configurations. It's used for angle changes and centering the 3D stick.

NG: Do you think gamers will get to grips with the new controller quickly?

Mr. Takeda: We will explain positions in each game. Ninety-nine percent of humans have two hands, so we need to give directions to them.

ng



Genyo Takeda, the man behind U64's joypad

will be two of the first games to make use of the readable/writable technology. Conventional wisdom says that some brand of magneto-optical drive system will be Nintendo's solution. However, rumors persist that Nintendo will keep Ultra 64's doors open to DVD technology, as and when the new format permits a mass-market price.

Third, there was no mention of Nintendo's plans to provide a network for Ultra 64 gaming (following the news that Nintendo was working with WWW-browser producer Netscape, everyone was hoping for some concrete news of what the partnership's goals were). Certainly Nintendo has attempted to use the vast number of its electronics boxes plugged into people's TVs to leverage some form of network before — with only limited success.

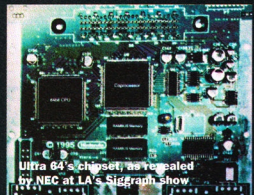
Fourth, from the very beginning industry-insiders have questioned the ability of many Nintendo's "Dream-Team" partners to produce quality interactive products for home use. Although

- there was little doubt that the games shown on videotape were legitimate, the fact that they weren't available to play was a big disappointment — and proof to the cynics that the "Dream Team" may not be all Nintendo would have you believe. Sure their Ultra 64 projects may look great, but how would they actually play? Do these guys truly understand and revere interaction, or is it just something to be added at the last minute to their beautiful images? With only three seconds of videotaped, non-interactive "game footage" on display, one needn't be cynical to work out why these games weren't available.



Kids returning to Tokyo after the public days of Saturday and Sunday unanimously agreed that Nintendo 64 was hot (top). You can look, but you'd better not touch. Nintendo refused to let anyone get too close to machines for photography. And videocameras were forbidden (above)

featuring U64



Ultra 64 Tech Specs

CPU

- MIPS 64-bit RISC CPU (customized R4000 series) running at 93.75 MHz

Reality Co-Processor

- 64-bit RISC processor running at 62.5 MHz
 - Built-in GSP (graphics and sound processor) and DP (pixel-drawing processor)
 - Graphics Processing Functions:
 - Z-buffer
 - Anti-aliasing
 - Realistic texture-mapping
- (Featuring: Tri-linear filtered mip-map interpolation, Perspective correction, Environment mapping)

Memory

- Rambus D-RAM 36 Mbits (4.5 MBs) at maximum transfer speed 4,500 Mbit per second

Resolution

- 256x224 or 640x480 with flicker-free interface mode support

Color

- Maximum: 16.8 million colors, 32-bit RGBA pixel-color frame buffer support
- Standard: 21-bit color output

Video Output

- RF, RGB, and HDTV compatible

Audio

- Stereo 16-bit
- 64 PCM channels sampled @44.1 KHz

Benchmark Performance

- Main CPU clocked at 125 MIPS (millions of instructions per second)
- Graphics Co-Processor clocked at 100+ MFLOPS (millions of floating point operations per second)
- 1,000,000 polygons per second, with all hardware graphic features turned on.

Controller

- Input for four controllers
- Analog/Digital
- Total of nine buttons

Cartridge

Nintendo has informed all developers that Ultra 64 games will be released on 8 MB (64 Mbit) cartridges. Given compression ratios of anything up to 8:1 (Nintendo is using JPEG technology to decompress texture maps on the fly), this will mean that Ultra 64 games could be equivalent to cartridge games of 200 Mbit "conventional" memory.

Bulky Drive

Nintendo has confirmed that the "bulky drive" will, in fact, be a custom-built magnetic storage medium. It will be unveiled at Shoshinkai in November 1996, and it is estimated that it will retail for less than \$150. Initial specifications indicated that the drive will accommodate "minidisks" each capable of reading/writing 100 to 150 MB, feeding an internal 2 MB of RAM at a rate of 2 MB per second. However, the latest rumors from Japan are that the drive will be dubbed "64DD," obviously in reference to its Nintendo 64 parent, but also to its final capacity of 64 MB. Of this, 20 MB will be writeable, with a data transfer rate of a more modest 1 MB per second (more than three times the speed of PlayStation's and Saturn's 300 KB per second CD-ROM drives).



George Zachary of SGI is interviewed on page 6

Understanding the Technology

For a more detailed explanation of Ultra 64's under-the-hood capabilities, **NEXT Generation** interviewed Silicon Graphics' George Zachary (see page 6). Nintendo and Silicon Graphics have both been keen to avoid using benchmark figures (such as "polygons per second") to compare Ultra 64 to its 32-bit competitors.

At Shoshinkai, Genyo Takeda, general manager of Nintendo's R&D3 explained why, and also took some time out to talk a little about Ultra 64's internal memory technology:

NG: Why hasn't Nintendo bombarded the press with benchmark performance figures to show Ultra 64's performance?

Mr. Takeda: I think that the reason why we are not emphasizing benchmark performance figures is that Nintendo has a kind of history where the hardware design is just to give the creator and designer some inspiration to make the games.

Evaluating hardware has to be done by playing games. That's Nintendo's philosophy.

NG: And what is the advantage of using the Rambus memory technology?

Mr. Takeda: The big difference, and the compelling thing that Rambus does for a game machine is lower its cost. And what that means is that it takes up much less space when building the system. Even though it runs at 500 megahertz, you can build it on a two layer PCB.

All other technologies require a four layer printed circuit board. And when you go from two layers to four layers you double the cost of the printed circuit board. And so that's about \$5 which doesn't sound like much, but when you build millions of these things...



featuring U64



Last came word from some of the more technically-savvy attendees that close scrutiny of *Super Mario 64* revealed that a couple of its hardware graphic features (tri-linear mip-mapped interpolation and anti-aliasing) weren't in fact being utilized. There are three possibilities: either the features aren't actually working probably yet, turning the features on resulted in an unacceptable degree of game slowdown, or the game designers simply haven't had enough time to get to grips with Ultra 64's technology yet. Either way, it doesn't bode well for the game system that was scheduled for a holiday 1995 launch, and at the time of the show had less than three months before all launch software has to be finalized.

Of all the major videogame companies, Nintendo has traditionally always played its cards closest to its

chest. But the level of secrecy concerning the Ultra 64 project has exceeded all Nintendo's previous efforts of furtiveness. Silicon Graphics' George Zachary (interviewed page 6) describes the atmosphere within SGI throughout the development of the Ultra 64 chipset: "There was an unbelievable amount of secrecy," he concedes.

"Because we are working with Nintendo in this area — and because there is such potential for the competition wanting to see what was going on — we had to deliberately cut down the level of communication internally. No one knew where the Ultra 64 lab was. We had a whole lab full of Ultra 64 stuff and 70 people working on the CPU alone — with a big *Donkey Kong Country* poster on the window so no one could see in!"

However, one must make the most of what one is given. And the downbeat mood of delegates gradually gave way to a more healthy and upbeat prognosis of Ultra 64 (or rather, Nintendo 64 as it is badged in Japan) having played *Super Mario 64*. Quite simply, the 50%-

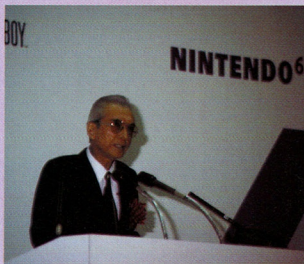


Costing just ¥25,000 with a free copy of *Super Mario 64*, Nintendo has lived up to its "below \$250" promise, in Japan at least

completed game is superb. All of Nintendo's (and, more specifically, Mr. Shigeru Miyamoto's) gameplay expertise has been brought to bear in making Mario's entrance to the 3D world a grand one. The game oozes life and excitement. The analog 3D control pad works like a dream, offering perfect 360° control as Mario runs, climbs, skids, swims, slides, and crawls around his 3D world — or "garden" as creator Shigeru Miyamoto likes to describe it. From a technological point of view — sure, there aren't significantly more polygons being pushed around the screen than in, say *Virtua Fighter 2* or *Wipeout*, but the texture mapping is superb and the high-resolution feel of the graphics seems to truly exceed Sony's and Sega's finest.

Dave Perry, head of Shiny Entertainment and creator of *Earthworm Jim*, typified the mood of those witnessing Ultra 64 for the first time: "When everyone first saw it running they said, 'oh OK.' But then, once they had played it, they said, 'oh, it's really cool.' Sure, some people felt that it hadn't lived up to the hype. First of all you think 'oh, it's just another 3D console and it looks just like the PlayStation.' But, for me, I felt that it looked just like PlayStation in hi-res which just adds picture quality. It's incredibly important."

So can Nintendo capitalize on Ultra 64's power? Perry has little doubt: "Nintendo is going to kick everyone's butt, certainly in Japan. I asked friends of mine how much they would spend to own an Ultra 64 right there and then and they said \$4,000 of their own money and \$10,000 of



Hiroshi Yamauchi, Nintendo Corporate Ltd.'s legendary chairman, spoke on day one. The theme of his speech was the need for quality software: a veiled warning to potential publishers that they'll only get to release a few U64 titles each — and that they had better be damned good

featuring U64



Howard Lincoln

Ultra 64's man in the US

Nintendo of America's Chairman talks about bringing Ultra 64 to American homes

Nintendo of America's chairman sits back in his chair after a tiring first day on the show floor. Given the immense significance of Shoshinkai and what was shown, it's been a rewarding experience for him and — he claims — an encouraging indication of what the US can expect in April. Despite a catalog of unfulfilled promises and delays, Nintendo has finally done it as far as Lincoln is concerned. **NEXT Generation** spoke to him to gauge just what the launch means to Nintendo and US gamers.

NG: Just how successful has this launch been for Nintendo?

Howard: It's been an outstanding show and the reaction from the trade and the media in Japan has been exceptional. Everyone who has seen *Super Mario 64* has been very impressed. So I think we've accomplished all the objectives we had for the show. We've shown the technology, we've shown what could be done with the hardware chipset, and now I think we can move forward very confidently knowing that we've got a winner in the hardware. But, we've also got to get three very strong games for the Japanese market and the US launch.

NG: The current plan is for a launch in late April in Japan and for the US launch to roughly coincide with that. You must have thought that Japan would get a head-start so that its sales could be used as a yardstick for the US launch?

Howard: Yeah, we certainly anticipated that would be the case. But Mr. Yamauchi indicated that he decided to delay in Japan — and not introduce the product before the end of the fiscal year, which is March 31 — just to give the people like Mr. Miyamoto a little bit of extra time.

I think that will prove to be a very



The always personable Howard Lincoln takes time out for the readers of NG

good decision — you just can't rush creativity. It just doesn't work.

NG: Do you think this attitude of respecting game development is unique to Nintendo?

Howard: I think it is unique to Nintendo in the sense that Nintendo has successfully launched three platforms in the last 10 years around the world. We know without any question that you cannot rush this, and you've got to have the finest games possible when you launch a new platform.

NG: Nintendo has been losing market share for the last five years, mainly to Sega. Do you think that Ultra 64 will reverse Nintendo's fortunes?

Howard: Well, Nintendo's market share in the 16-bit market is looking better every month and that's simply because we have not abandoned the category that has a 16- to 18-million installed base. I think the decision to wait and not introduce Ultra 64 in the back half of 1995 has now proven to be a good decision. We said that we had quality software, which we do. We indicated that we were raising the quality bar, which we have.

I'm not concerned about the so-called head-start that Sony and Sega have had because I think that Nintendo is a very, very strong franchise in the US. We have all the infrastructure in place, the marketing, sales, and distribution, and we have consumers who associate Nintendo's name with very good games.

NG: Will Ultra 64 really launch in the US and Europe in April 1996? A lot of people doubt that you can make it happen. What are the odds?

Howard: I don't like to put odds on something like this because it can be misinterpreted. At this time our plan is to launch Nintendo Ultra 64 both in the US and Europe at the end of April. I'm not aware of anything that will change this plan at this point.

NG: A few of Ultra 64's supposed flagship games — such as *Cruis'n USA* and *Killer Instinct* — are conspicuous by their absence at Shoshinkai. Why aren't they being shown?

Howard: True, both of these games are titles we said we would launch with, but gamers should not be concerned that they're not here. Both games are in development and both games will be launched in 1996.

Killer Instinct, specifically, is probably not a game that will launch initially in Japan, so that's the reason for that. Regarding *Cruis'n USA*, Mr. Yamauchi made the final decision on what games would be here at the show and this simply wasn't one of them. Having said that, we just got through a conference today with the people who are developing *Cruis'n USA* and it's looking fine, so I don't think there will be a problem with that game.

NG: Nintendo has worked with its close-knit "Dream Team" to produce games up until this point. When will other game developers get to work with Ultra 64?

Howard: Within the very near future — I'd say in the next 30 to 60 days —

featuring U64



NCL [Nintendo Corporate Limited, Japan] will announce a developer program and third party publisher program. We are working on both of those programs for the US and Europe and will not finalize anything until we see what NCL does.

NG: Why are companies such as Capcom, Konami, and Namco, which are traditionally core Japanese partners of Nintendo, not part of the Dream Team?

Howard: Well, the Dream Team has been confined to US and European-based third party publishers. The letter agreements that we have with these various companies like Virgin, Acclaim, and EA are all with respect to the North American market.

For whatever the reason, this program was not something that Mr. Yamauchi wanted to do in the Japanese market — but he gave me the green light to do it in the US market. We at Nintendo of America are quite pleased with what we've done. We've got games at various stages of development and all of these games are going to come on line in '96 and, in some cases, in '97, and they will be exclusive to the Nintendo Ultra 64 platform.

NG: One of the biggest concerns with third party game developers we've spoken to is that they're very wary of returning to the extremely expensive, dangerous and restrictive business of making games on cartridges.

How are you going to convince these people that there's a viable business here that they should embrace?

Howard: The short and sweet answer is that since the very start, any third party that's ever associated itself with Nintendo and made a good game has made a great deal of money. I'm confident this will continue in the future.

There's always going to be grouching by third party publishers about the publishing programs of Sega, Sony, and Nintendo — but I think that's to be expected. I'm very confident that third party publishers will be very anxious to publish on Ultra 64.

Pricewise, I fully expect that third party software for Ultra 64 will come in at about the same price as 16-bit software is right now — in the \$60 to \$70 range.



company money! When it comes to the US it's going to sell out even though the [\$90] games are very expensive.

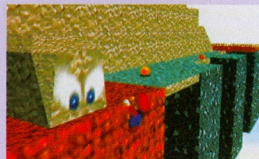
Perry was also very excited about Ultra 64 as a game creator. "Obviously the controller is the big special move that they have gone for. It definitely changes things and it's wonderful. It allows you, when driving in a racing game for example, to lean into the corners so much more easily than having to keep tapping a button."

Jez San, managing director of Argonaut and creator of *Star Fox*, agrees. "The joystick is unusual looking but I like the controls. The thumb control feels nice and strong and also sensitive." He also agrees that despite the lack of games available for hands-on testing, what he saw confirmed that Ultra 64 truly offers the performance leap that Nintendo boasts. "Graphics, technology-wise, are a step up from PlayStation and Saturn in that it's got perspective-correct texturing and tri-linear interpolation. Although the *Mario* game used only bi-linear interpolation [a less-powerful mode] it looked quite good. It meant that they could use very small textures and have them zoomed up really big. They did good work on the walls and the wood. PlayStation and Saturn don't have these features."

San did, however, agree that the data storage question is a big problem

and that until Nintendo actually presents game developers with some genuine alternative it could make game development difficult. "It's going to be tough to fit [Ultra 64] games onto the 8 MB cartridges because when you start using 3D graphics and you have a lot of polygons and a lot of texture maps, it all adds up — and soon you find that 8 MBs aren't enough."

Nintendo argues that proprietary decompression technology will ease the memory problem (it claims that while it can't match the 650 MB capacity of a CD, it can compress 16 MB onto a 4 MB cartridge). However, as far as most game producers are concerned, the amount of data that Nintendo's cartridges can hold is secondary to the problem of how much the cartridges will cost. A PlayStation or Saturn CD costs less than \$10 to manufacture — including the license fee. It is estimated that producing an Ultra 64 cartridge will cost at least \$30. And with many publishers having suffered tremendous losses after being stuck with large volumes of expensive Super NES and Genesis cartridges after the collapse of the 16-bit era, few are eager to go back to the bad old days of cartridges. However, it's hard not to have faith in Nintendo. And it would be naive to assume that it wouldn't



The wonderful world of *Super Mario 64* wowed the crowds. But why was it one of only two games available for hands on testing? Explanations and sinister conspiracy theories abound...

featuring U64



With 100 Nintendo 64 units set up for play, it came as no surprise that the Virtual Boy and Super NES booths were deserted

unnecessarily risk its entire business without thinking the problems through and coming up with some solutions.

Jim Fisher of Mindscape has no doubt that Nintendo will find a way to warm game developers to the idea of cartridge manufacturing once more. "Nintendo has always worked with partners and distributors to get software prices right" he argued. His belief was echoed by Yamauchi himself who stated that Nintendo would work very closely with game distributors to make sure that pricing would be right. "In order to facilitate this new 64-bit era we have to somehow reduce the list prices of software titles," Yamauchi stated. "We will propose ideas and materials so that distributors can reduce list prices," he cryptically concluded.

Part of Yamauchi's proposed solution to the software problem is to emphasize quality over quantity. In emphasizing this point, Yamauchi cited videogaming history and urged the game industry to learn from its mistakes.

"The Famicom [NES] was introduced to the market 12 years ago," he reminded his audience. "And that was upgraded to the Super Famicom. Before Famicom came into existence, the videogame boom started in the US. But this boom was just a temporary fad, it disappeared shortly and its market collapsed. Why did the US market collapse? This was because the software titles that were released into the market in large volume were not fun for users. Many users were very much disappointed, and many of them felt that videogames were not fun. There was no point in keeping up with videogames, and many people therefore left the

videogame market. Videogames are for entertainment, they are not absolutely necessary in everyday life. That's why this market was completely destroyed."

Mr. Yamauchi continued: "[In 1995], however, a great number of software titles have been introduced into the market and now developers are at a loss as to what to do, what to develop? Under such circumstances, it is most likely that developers will choose the easiest path. For example, they will try to develop as many titles as possible so at least one of them will make a big hit in the market. So they may end up with a large number of software titles." His conclusion? "The users will simply reject these third-rate software titles."

He's saying that unless the game industry starts tightening up standards and reducing the number of games it produces, then it's headed for a crash that would make 1983 look like walk in the park. He's right, of course. What remains questionable is whether Nintendo's entry to an already-overcrowded market will sort out the problem once and for all or merely add to it. And we won't know the answer to that question until Ultra 64 takes on PlayStation and Saturn head-to-head.

So to Ultra 64's launch. It is slated for April 21st in Japan, and those who would tow the Nintendo line say that

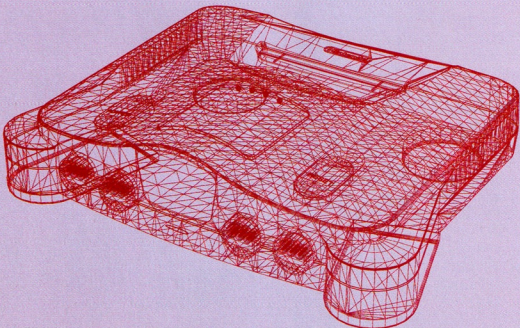
the US can look forward to a simultaneous debut. Others are not so sure. Either way, it is sure that Nintendo will launch Ultra 64 with all the power that befits a company that was once described as the game industry's 800 lb. gorilla.

It is known that Nintendo 64 is billed at ¥25,000 in Japan — which translates nicely to an on-target price of \$249 in the US. It is also a certainty that Ultra 64 will come with *Super Mario 64* included in the box. Nintendo knows what it takes to sell mountains of hardware — and that's good games.

In conclusion, Ultra 64's unveiling at Shoshinkai posed more questions than it answered. On the one hand, everyone knew that it would all come down to *Mario* in the end. Shigeru Miyamoto's moustachioed plumber was the driving force behind NES and Super NES, and will be for Ultra 64 also. *Super Mario 64* will be a great game — **NEXT Generation** will bet its reputation on it. On the other hand, no one had anticipated the extent to which Ultra 64 would rely on just this one title.

It's difficult to tell if Mr. Yamauchi's decision to show so little is testament to the scale of Miyamoto's achievement and the sheer brilliance of *Mario's* 3D debut, or whether it says more about the lack of anything else to shout about. Only time will tell.

ng



Of all the next generation consoles, Ultra 64 is probably the most stylized of the bunch. Its sexy curves, and sleek, ergonomic features make it the best looking game machine yet



Shigeru Miyamoto

the master of the game

Nintendo's premier game creator talks about Mario's brave new 3D world



Shigeru Miyamoto is exhausted. He has just spent innumerable late nights preparing for the debut of Nintendo's 64-bit

game machine, and he has been plagued by TV crews and journalists all day long at the gigantic Makuhari Messe exhibition center one hour from Tokyo.

As the most revered game creator of all time and eminent catalyst in the development of key Ultra 64 titles, he has arguably been the most instrumental figure in the evolution of Ultra 64. Shigeru Miyamoto's role in Ultra 64's development process has been one of quality assurance on the software side.

As well as acting as development director on the first wave of internally developed U64 projects, Miyamoto has also been overseeing the work of companies such as Paradigm Simulation and Angel Studios in the US. Having so

many areas of interest that constantly demand his attention means he is always under pressure. **NEXT Generation** caught up with him at a cocktail party reception organized by Nintendo of America after the Shoshinkai show.

NG: What was the most exciting thing for you today at the launch of Ultra 64?

Mr. Miyamoto: I can't really single out one thing, but I suppose I'm happy that such an important day went well. I was very concerned about what everyone would think about the fact that only one game was playable at the show instead of the 10 we promised.

Basically, we made a decision at the last minute to give people the chance to play one game for a long time instead of having lots of different games that people would have only had a short time to play on. So, at least I know that everybody has had a chance to play the new Mario.

NG: Do you think that the games shown gave a fair representation of what the Nintendo 64 is capable of?

Mr. Miyamoto: I think only 50% of the machine's full capacity was revealed today. More great things can be done but at least we were able to show what the Nintendo 64 is able to do right now. **NG:** Which Nintendo 64 games are you personally involved with?

Mr. Miyamoto: When it comes to Nintendo's games such as *Super Mario 64*, *Kirby Ball*, *Wave Race*, *Zelda*, *Star Fox*, and *Mario Kart R*, I'm involved in their development 100%. As for games from our "second parties" such as Paradigm Simulation's *Pilotwings* and Angel Studio's *Buggie Boogie* my involvement has been on a lesser scale.

NG: Is this the most number of games you've ever had to oversee at one time?

Mr. Miyamoto: Not really. I've always taking charge of about 10 games, so this situation isn't that different.

featuring U64



NG: We've heard that in order to meet the April launch date, the code for the Nintendo 64 games that will be available at launch must be completed at least by Valentine's Day, February 14. Are you going to have enough time?

Mr. Miyamoto: Well, there are some administrative things we can do to ensure that it doesn't have to be quite as early as February. But, yes, all I can say is that I'm pretty busy right now! In the case of *Mario 64*, I am actually doing a job of director rather than supervising everything as producer. So, while acting as producer for new 16-bit games I'm also doing the job of director on *Super Mario 64*. Basically, the thing I need most at the moment is time — I am very worried about time!

NG: When did you start work on *Super Mario 64*?

Mr. Miyamoto: *Super Mario 64* was the first game we started, and we began work about one and a half years ago. Actually we started working on an experimental *Super Mario 64* system almost five years ago based around the Super FX chip. Unfortunately, this didn't come to fruition so it's only been about 18 months since we put the Mario team on the project and started using the Onyx development workstations. It's possibly the shortest development schedule yet for a Mario game.

NG: It seems some software shown today was not using all of the Nintendo 64 features, for example the mip-mapping was turned off in *Super Mario 64*...

Mr. Miyamoto: If I can just talk about the Mario game, I think if you carefully watch every little thing in the Mario game you can see these techniques

being used, but concerning the other games, some developers are not yet using such effects. Actually, these technologies that are hyped in the specifications are something that you can incorporate at the very last moment of the development schedule.

NG: *Yoshi's Island* is the pinnacle of your work on the 2D Mario series. Do you feel that, graphics aside, as a first generation game compared to a fifth generation game, *Super Mario 64* can play as well as *Yoshi's Island*?

Mr. Miyamoto: I think *Yoshi's Island* is a game that emphasizes the fun that can be had in 16-bit games. But there are always limitations in making something intensified. As a creator I wanted to make something new and to widen the experience as much as possible. I am not talking only about adding a 3D aspect, but I am talking about really improving the gameplay. It is this new dimension of gameplay I want to include in *Super Mario 64*.

NG: With the exception of *Super Mario Kart*, *Super Mario 64* is the first time that Mario is appearing in a 3D world. How much work and thought went into how the 3D world should look? Should it be similar to the 8-bit and 16-bit worlds or should it be different?

Mr. Miyamoto: It's very difficult to compare between the existing Mario games and *Super Mario 64*. We must consider them as two different kinds of games. Personally, I wanted to make a game that looks like a 3D interactive cartoon. I wanted to create a small garden where Mario can meet realtime 3D characters and the player would be able to move the character with the controller just as if it were a real cartoon.

NG: In terms of gameplay, what has been kept from the original, and what is new? In other words, will players with experience of previous Mario games have an advantage when playing *Super Mario 64* over Mario novices?

Mr. Miyamoto: Frankly speaking, I wanted to make a game that every kind of player



Remembering how it felt to explore as a child, Shigeru Miyamoto bases his games on childhood experiences and adventures

could play so that there would no advantage for players with experience. However, I think those familiar with traditional digital controls may have some trouble adjusting to the new analogue control stick, but of course, once they do, they'll find it a much more rewarding experience. I expect that first-time Mario players will take to the analogue joystick quicker than those players who are used to traditional ones.

NG: Just how revolutionary do you think this game controller is? Is this joystick going to make a big change in the way games are played?

Mr. Miyamoto: From a creative point of view, in the past there have been lots of games that could not have been developed because of a lack of analogue control. In fact, the consumer has often had to buy custom controllers as accessories so companies have been afraid of supporting such peripherals. We've given a lot of thought to this controller and developers now have the opportunity to create a whole new entertainment field.

NG: It has taken around 15 to 20 years to perfect 2D gameplay (and 10 years just to perfect Mario's gameplay in 2D from *Mario Bros* to *Yoshi's Island*). How long do you think it will take developers to truly master the art of creating games in a 3D world?

Mr. Miyamoto: It has already taken 10 years to arrive to the present level of 3D with the PC, and we are still not doing it well. But because of the large number of pseudo-3D games we've seen, I don't think we're that far from reaching the same level of gameplay depth in a 3D world such as *Super Mario 64*. In fact, we've already reached a high level of gameplay in the version shown



Can the master of the 2D game apply his skills to the 3D world? If the 50% completed version of *Super Mario 64* is anything to go by, then the answer is a resolute "yes"



here today and closer to the launch you'll see this aspect of the game shine through even more.

NG: Of all the Ultra 64 games you're currently involved with, which one are you most excited about?

Mr. Miyamoto: Because I'm the director of *Super Mario 64*, this is obviously the project I'm involved with the most and consequently the most excited about. I'm also interested in the outcome of *Pilotwings* and I've got high hopes for *Wave Race* which I think could be a really exciting game.

NG: This seems like an attempt to reincarnate *F-Zero* on the Nintendo 64...

Mr. Miyamoto: Seemingly, yes, you can

NG: What do you think of games on Saturn and PlayStation?

Mr. Miyamoto: Allow me to say very frankly, that yes, some of the games are really good. But when I say good I mean they are usually just good conversions of arcade games. These developers are simply following a project set by hardware companies. To my eyes, much of the other software looks poor and many of these games seem experimental.

NG: Another aspect of Nintendo 64 that a lot of people are talking about is the potential for networked games. Does this concept interest you?

Mr. Miyamoto: Everybody is excited about the future

this aspect mainly because for the first time we have a machine with a fast enough CPU to handle four independent screens at speed. That's why we decided to include four joy pad ports on the machine itself.


NG: We've noticed you've stopped smoking. Is this because you simply don't have the time anymore?

Mr. Miyamoto: No, it's because I have to work with Americans! [laughs]

NG: So what new vices have you taken up instead of smoking?

Mr. Miyamoto: I've been eating lots of sweets which explains this... [points to his stomach]

As the interview concluded and Mr. Miyamoto prepared to make his way to his hotel room for a well deserved nap,

NEXT Generation expressed its disappointment at only being able to play two games at the show. Jokingly, he turned to his colleague and quipped in Japanese, "Let's show them the rest of the games in secret." After a curt look from his PR manager and some words of warning, he let slip (again in Japanese) that he had five playable games in his hotel room, before chuckling to himself and wandering off. Needless to say, the invitation to bring up a six pack wasn't extended... 



Shigeru Miyamoto is interviewed at length in NG 2. He is universally regarded as the world's finest game creator



see the design is similar to *F-Zero*. But I want to introduce new kinds of vehicles such as waterbikes and also a very undulating terrain with lots of jumps.

NG: Mario is the oldest game character of them all. Do you think he can be as popular in 1996 as he has been during the reign of 8-bit and 16-bit, or do you think he needs to evolve and to change?

Mr. Miyamoto: Well, do you want me make a entirely new character? [laughs]

NG: You must be very excited about the potential of a 64-bit *Zelda*...

Mr. Miyamoto: Yes, very much. Personally, I think *Zelda* should have been in three dimensions since the beginning. And although I shouldn't talk about it right now, I'm very interested in the potential of the writeable storage device which should give the players more game time and even greater levels of gameplay depth.

and there are many different ways for us to explore. Networking is the kind of thing we would like to work on and Nintendo 64 has some special extension ports created for this very possibility.

However, I think it would be better to talk about it when we have sold 3 million Nintendo 64 units!

NG: The only games we saw today that made use of the four joy pad inputs were *Kirby Ball 64* and *Super Mario Kart R*. Do you feel that the four-player option is something that will be used a lot?

Mr. Miyamoto: We've decided to push

Ultra 64: the Games

Over the following pages, every available Ultra 64 game is previewed. At this early stage, Nintendo is reluctant to hand out too much information. However, by talking directly to developers and to relaxed sources within Nintendo, **NEXT Generation** is able to present the following game guide to Ultra 64. A complete list of titles in development is on page 65.

featuring U64



Super Mario 64

Is 3D *Mario* a logical evolution of gameplay, or just a graphic showboat for Ultra 64?

Format:	Ultra 64
Publisher:	Nintendo
Developer:	Nintendo
Release Date:	April 21st
Origin:	Japan

Although at its time of launch *Super Mario World* was one of the most graphically-sophisticated Super NES titles, the *Mario* series is heralded for its deep and absorbing gameplay — not its looks.

The *Mario* series has progressed from 1984's *Mario Bros* to 1995's *Yoshi's Island* (incorporating the graphic flourishes of *Donkey Kong Country* along the way) never leaving the 2D world. It is safe to say that *Yoshi's Island* is the high-water mark of 2D gameplay. It is a fifth-generation project and the fruits of over 10 years of labor and experience. The evolution of the *Mario* series led the rest of gaming by the hand, blazing a trail, and teaching lessons in game mechanics, structure, and sheer playability to any who would study its secrets.

But now Nintendo has had to start with a clean sheet of paper. *Super Mario 64* had to be a 3D game (as the flagship title for Ultra 64, it had to be seen to exploit the hardware's graphic



After Bowser turns up the heat (top), Mario suffers from what can only be described as burning butt (right). Painful, but kinda funny



powers), and hence Nintendo has had to abandon all of its 2D expertise and start over from scratch.

Do not underestimate the difference between creating a 2D game and creating a 3D game. The world of 3D is a brave new frontier, an uncharted wilderness with few previously successful titles to guide the way. *Super Mario 64* is therefore the start of a whole new book — and not merely an additional chapter to the original story.

So what has Nintendo, under the direction of Shigeru Miyamoto, achieved with *Super Mario 64*? To what extent has it been able to incorporate all of its gameplay expertise into a brand new structure? And how can a game that is required to be a graphic tour de force also remain faithful to its gameplay-oriented roots?

The 50% completed version available for hands-on testing at Shoshinkai

answers many of these questions. Let's take a look at the challenges faced by Miyamoto and the *Super Mario 64* team and how they dealt with them.

First, the 3D world itself.

Miyamoto faced a tough decision in how to present *Super Mario 64*. Should he try and recreate the fantasy/cartoon world of Mario's previous games, but this time in 3D, or should *Super Mario 64* see the creation of an entirely fresh universe? In the end, he erred toward the former. From the outset, this is obviously a *Mario* game. Mario looks exactly as we always imagined he would look in 3D, complete with primary-



The central hallway of level one houses doors that take Mario to the various stages



This sequence helpfully shows off the camera panning, but it also illustrates the depth of *Super Mario 64*'s gameplay (from top to bottom): 1) Mario approaches a dangerous plant. 2) The camera pans to give a close up of its jaws. 3) Having woken the plant from its sleep (Mario could have crawled up the stairs, thus avoiding a confrontation), he now has to run past it. 4) Hugging the wall, he can now creep inches beyond the reach of the plant's jaws

colored trademark overalls, cap, gloves, and moustache. His familiar jog 'n' jump is instantly recognizable, even from the roaming, over-the-shoulder 3D

perspective. The terrain and obstacles he explores will feel eerily familiar to 16-bit *Mario* veterans, and even some familiar faces will appear — notably Bowser, King of the Coopers.

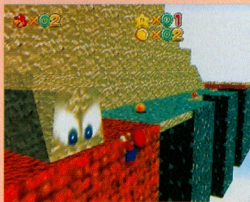
The control of Mario — making use of the fully analog 360° thumb pad — is simply superb. Nintendo technicians claim that the pad can detect a full range of 360 possible directions. Game designers will have to decide for themselves whether or not their software will handle this range of input. Either way, the Ultra 64 pad will enable even the most basic of software a degree of directional control above and beyond the eight-way limit of a

Everything can be touched, explored or experimented with. In creating a 3D world with real physics, Miyamoto has truly created a virtual reality

PlayStation or Saturn controller. It also adds a new dimension of velocity: Ultra 64's analog thumb pad is able to detect degrees of movement in particular directions — and not just simply "on" or "off." *Super Mario 64* makes use of these features extensively: Press up fully and Mario will run, press it halfway and Mario will walk, press it a little and in some circumstances Mario will crawl or tip-toe his way forward.

In other sections of the game, say for example when Mario is sliding down an icy slope or skidding down a bonus level race track, pushing left or right in various degrees will steer Mario subtly or drastically. This truly is a revolution in gameplay, yet it needs to be experienced first-hand to be appreciated.

Once again, it is Miyamoto's knack of pacing that makes playing *Super Mario 64* so satisfying. Experimentation



Desiring to explore the floor, Mario needn't jump, he can ease himself down carefully

is rewarded, not only with points bonuses and access to secret levels, but with the subconscious learning of tricks and techniques that will be required later in the game. Upon first entering the ice level, for example, players will find it impossible to resist the simple (purely superfluous) urge to skid Mario around on his belly; banking off the small undulating hills, and sliding down slopes. With no bad guys to interfere with your fun, and no time limit pressing, Miyamoto is gently encouraging players to learn a skill that will be required later in the



Exploring underwater, Mario discovers a giant submarine (top). Deja vu? (above)

featuring U64



This fiery level requires Mario to stick to the path — even when enemies are present

level. It is this detailed planning and forethought that made *Super Mario World* such a classic, and is alive and well in its 64-bit big brother.

Mario's 3D world is a work of genius. Misjudge a jump onto a wall, for example, and instead of plummeting to your doom, you will find yourself diving into a lake. Mario automatically starts treading water, and it's then up to you whether you decide to scale the cliff back up to wall, paddle around and explore the lake, or dive for hidden treasure. The degree of freedom in Mario's world is the most extensive **NEXT Generation** has yet to



The camera adjusts automatically to Mario's movement, or you can adjust it manually

encounter. Everything can be touched, experimented with and explored. In creating a 3D world with real physics and extensive artificial intelligence, Miyamoto has truly created a virtual reality. Another example: in an orchard within the grounds of a castle, players may well seek refuge from the attack of ground-based enemies by scaling a tree. At the top of the tree you discover that it is possible to jump out of the branches and onto the battlements of the castle. Further rustling of the tree's branches, however, will awaken a sleeping owl. A well-timed jump will see Mario grab hold of the owl's legs as it takes flight, resulting in a free ride (complete with

The Mario series has blazed a trail; teaching lessons in game mechanics, structure and sheer playability to any who would study its secrets

sweeping 3D views of the orchard beneath you) to the highest turrets of the castle. The depth and scope of Miyamoto's vision is stunning.

So what problems are there? We have only three major criticisms of the 50%-completed *Super Mario 64* that was played at Shoshinkai. All of these are fixable, however, and merely symptomatic of a game that is far from finished.

First, although exploring the world is fun in and of itself, there is a conspicuous lack of enemies and fatal obstacles. Presumably Nintendo wished people to enjoy their first experience of Ultra 64 gaming, and deliberately set the challenge level to a minimum for the show. This can be fixed. Though whether an increased number of bad guys can be introduced to the world with little or no sacrifice to the ability of players to

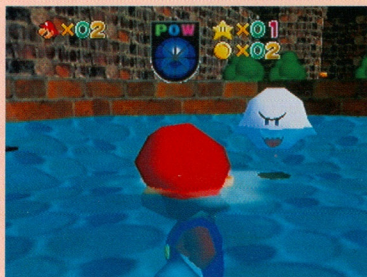
simply enjoy wondering around is a matter for time spent gametesting. Similarly, the enemies need to be introduced in such a way as to make battling them a matter of skill and judgment (as opposed to the rather haphazard dodge-then-attack nature of the demo on display).

Unfortunately, time for exhaustive playtesting and tweaking is a luxury that Nintendo ain't got.

Second, the few enemies that were on show lacked advanced artificial intelligence, and seemingly required only a one-dimensional attack strategy to finish them off. The boss level with Bowser, for example, sure looks great. But once you've figured out that all you have to do is pick him up by the tail and



Ultra 64's graphical effects get a workout as Mario runs through this shallow lake



Pick up the baby penguin and you can be sure that mother will follow you. This could be useful (top). This guy's trouble (above)

spin him around, you feel cheated. You get the feeling that the whole level was designed purely to set up a graphic set-piece that doesn't do justice to the rest of the game.

Last, the "roving camera" that provides players with a view of the game was glitchy. Often it would pan or zoom inconveniently, leaving players stuck in a difficult situation with only a close-up of Mario's butt to aid them.

Interesting, for sure, but not terribly useful.

In conclusion, Nintendo has a classic on its hands with *Super Mario 64*, and Shigeru Miyamoto has once again proved himself as the king of gameplay.

NEXT Generation has faith in Nintendo's abilities to iron out the bugs outlined previously and provide gamers with the revolutionary experience they will need to spend \$250 on a new game machine. Now, if only it can get the rest of the launch line-up up to the same standards, Nintendo will truly be the gaming force to reckon with in 1996.

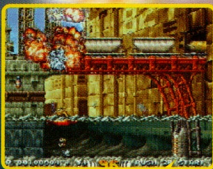
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Kirby Bowl 64

Function defeats form in one of the year's strangest and more abstract puzzle and action games

Format: **Ultra 64**

Publisher: **Nintendo**

Developer: **HAL**

Release Date: **TBA**

Origin: **Japan**

Probably one of the most overlooked titles at the show was HAL's *Kirby Bowl 64*, a strange new puzzle and action game that will

represent the first release by an Ultra 64 second party developer. Despite the use of many of the same programming tricks that were shown in other games, *Kirby Bowl*'s somewhat abstract nature and plain visuals kept it from being a real crowd pleaser when up against obvious charmers like *Ultra Mario* and *Pilotwings 64*. The thing is, there's actually a lot within the title that's quite impressive, both in terms of technology and gameplay, that may have been overshadowed by the presence of more obvious sales hits.

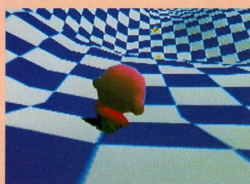
Kirby Bowl is similar in many ways to the arcade classic *Marble Madness* or the Macintosh's *Sumo*. In four-player mode, each competitor controls a rolling ball around a rolling 3D landscape and attempts to knock the others out of



In four-player mode, the object of Kirby Ball is to bash the other three players out of a concave dish. Is this Ultra 64's *Bomberman*?

play. Graphics are basic, using checkerboard patterns a lot like those in Electronic Art's early Genesis title *Zany Golf*. The simple premise and visuals should prove to be fairly entertaining, and the execution so far has been excellent. Other rounds feature different backgrounds and control methods including one that appears to have Kirby mounted on a snowboard.

Gamers will immediately notice *Kirby Bowl*'s smooth control and rapid response during play. This is due to Ultra 64's revolutionary new joystick that combines the best features of both analog and digital control. Like a PC joystick, the U64 control pad sends X and Y values from the extremes of —127 to 127 that lets the computer know not only which direction the player is pushing, but how far as well. This method of the control has given PCs the edge in the flight simulations for years



while keeping it from ever excelling in quick response genres like fighting and platform titles. To keep this from happening, Ultra 64 also checks the on/off settings of each direction and sends the digital response in the same packet with the analog value all at a very high sample rate. In this way programmers can decide which method suits their game the best, or can use both values to create subtle blends of control never before seen in gaming.

Kirby Bowl is far from being the greatest title at Shoshinkai, but its definitely not one to be ignored. Its smooth movement and multiplayer modes hint at a game that, while not as flashy as some of its colleagues, could break new gaming ground.



In one player mode, the object is to race Kirby over a series of undulating courses

Zero Divide:

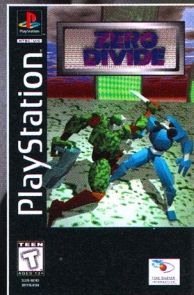
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Legend of Zelda

The game that Shigeru Miyamoto says "always should have been in 3D" returns

Format:	Ultra 64
Publisher:	Nintendo
Developer:	Nintendo
Release Date:	November
Origin:	Japan

One of the biggest surprises at this year's Shoshinkai show was that Nintendo was halting development of a cartridge-based

Zelda sequel and instead reading it for a "bulky drive" release at next year's convention. The immensely popular adventure series has been second only to the Mario Bros. games in selling consumers new hardware, creating a great deal of curiosity as to why Nintendo would intentionally hold off release for another full year.

The answer of course is in the medium. The bulk-storage device that Nintendo plans to release at the end of 1996 was being designed with games like this in mind.

The NES addition of a battery backup with the original *Zelda* was the greatest advance forward in both the adventure and RPG genres that has ever been made. Each successive upgrade in battery technology offered players



Link's grand return to gaming sees him fighting hand-to-hand with an armored foe



This early demo may, in fact, bear no resemblance to the game that is destined to appear on Ultra 64's "bulky drive"

(although it was invisible to them) a little more space, and therefore a little more personalized control over their worlds, ending up with the last Super NES carts that were capable of holding 256 KBs of info. According to inside sources at Nintendo, the new drive will have several megabytes of storage capacity, without the additional \$10 that a battery backup system was reported to add to the price of a cartridge.

This will mean that whenever you return to the game, it will know everything about your previous games. It will know exactly where you are in the game, and — if Nintendo's plans to introduce a gaming network reach fruition — enable you to join in other people's adventures with your own personal character.

So what about the game itself? Well, the fact is that the videotape sequences shown at Shoshinkai bear very little resemblance to what the final product



will actually look like. Spectacular scenes of a surprisingly large Link clad in polished armor are most likely to end up in cut-scenes rather than representing the actual play.

Mr. Miyamoto has stated several times in the past that initial design of a *Zelda* title has always been more time-consuming than the *Mario* titles, since players are not as restricted in their exploration of the game world. The immense size of this latest title in the series, along with the fact that players are likely to be able to use the storage capacity of the bulky drive to personalize their play in ways that cartridge gamers can only dream of, ensure that this game will be no exception.

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He's growling like a rabid dog
and looking at you
like a piece of
meat.



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Pilotwings 64

Nintendo goes one better on one of 16-bit's greatest ever flight games

Format: **Ultra 64**
 Publisher: **Nintendo**
 Developer: **Paradigm**
 Release Date: **TBA**
 Origin: **US**

One "Dream Team" member new to the world of home gaming is Paradigm Simulation Inc., a company that has made a name for itself several times over already.

Starting out by making reality simulations for a number of different clients (including the US military), Paradigm has slowly shifted toward the entertainment industry over the last four years, recently creating the systems for the popular Magic Edge location-based entertainment sites in Japan and the US. Now the company is making the jump to the home by combining the game know-how of Nintendo's Shigeru



Sources close to Paradigm (*Pilotwings* developers) hint that the final game may include weapons of one kind or another. If so, this would mark a radical departure from the original's gameplay

Miyamoto with six years of SGI simulation experience to create a breathtaking sequel to the Super NES classic *Pilotwings*. The result, the creatively named *Pilotwings 64*, is the type of title that will sell systems, not just for its novel approach to gaming, but also for providing proof that the U64's graphics hardware is more than just a small step forward.

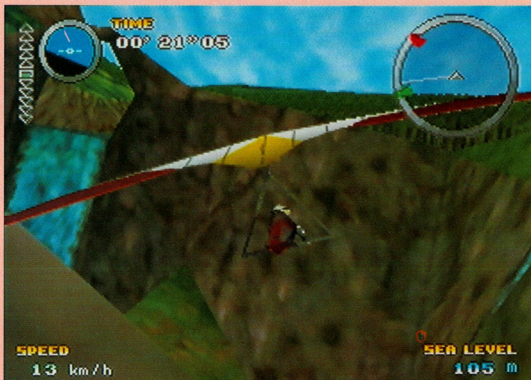
Pilotwings 64 will also provide some new challenges in its gameplay as well. Players will be allowed to choose from

six different characters and jump into exciting flight opportunities in such varied craft as a hang glider, a jetpack, a gyrocopter, and other craft yet to be announced. Although there is still no verification as of yet, industry insiders also hint that a combat option may be included as well (missile launches were spotted on the demo tape running at the Shoshinkai show).

Dave Gatchel, Paradigm's vice president of Entertainment

Applications, seems very pleased with what U64 offers on a technical level, saying in a recent interview, "We were very surprised with U64's ability to match up with some of the more high-end systems. We tried to take full advantage of the system in the way we've manipulated the textures and with many of the special effects [using U64's built-in perspective correction and environment-mapping features]. We were able to incorporate a lot of techniques that we developed for load management as well as for calling and processing 3D data that we use on high end systems." High praise indeed from a company used to dealing with SGI machines that start at \$80,000 apiece.

Although there's no doubt that *Pilotwings* was one of Super NES' finest hours, it's great to see the title come to a system that has the processing power and graphic strength to present it with style. This is surely one of the games that will make or break Ultra 64.



This is exactly the game Ultra 64 was designed to handle: a free 3D world, generated on the fly. Although *Pilotwings 64* wasn't playable, Nintendo sources claim it flies as good as looks



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Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire

Format: **Ultra 64**

Publisher: **LucasArts**

Developer: **LucasArts**

Release Date: **TBA**

Origin: **US**

Typically, movie conversion games are little more than churned out platform titles that have a few sprites vaguely resembling members of the cast.

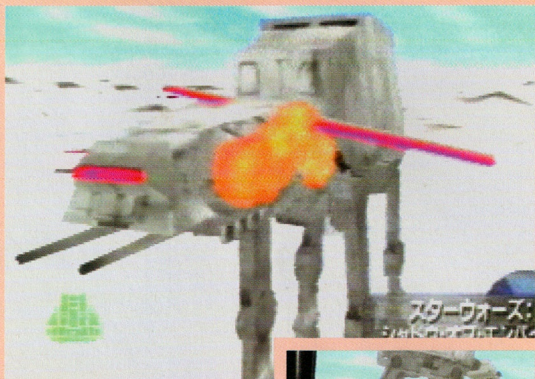
LucasArts has always been the exception to the rule. Past titles like *X-Wing*, *Tie Fighter*, and *Dark Forces* are designed to truly bring the player into the *Star Wars* universe, adding new stories, excellent gameplay, and fantastic special effects as part of the package. The company's first offering for Ultra 64, *Shadows of the Empire*, looks to be on the same track. By using the Ultra 64's graphics power to detail one of the most popular universes of all time, LucasArts has created a title that promises to be one of the most talked about games available for the new console.

The most impressive feature of the new title is that it enables players to



Gamers will be glad that LucasArts took the *X-Wing* and not the *Rebel Assault* approach

One of the most anticipated Ultra 64 games features visuals from the *Star Wars* universe. Although not available for hands-on testing, evidently Nintendo's President Howard Lincoln picks this as one of his favorites...



So how are you going to handle this AT-AT? Shoot at it head on, or use your tow rope to lasso its legs? Your destiny awaits young Jedi

maneuver their craft within a true 3D world while interacting with enemies from the *Star Wars* universe. There are several different levels offering up different styles of gameplay, from piloting a fighter craft around the surface of Hoth fighting Imperial Walkers (with full freedom of movement), to blazing through forest landscapes on a Speeder Bike. Graphics feature beautiful texture-mapped objects and enemies as well as SGI-rendered special effects.

License titles

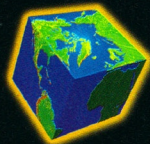
are an important part of selling software to the average consumer, but there's no reason why those titles have to be churned out with no care for quality. Hopefully, by trying to appeal to both movie buffs and



hard-core gamers, LucasArts will once again show the industry that it is possible to combine great gameplay with a great property and still come out ahead of the rest.



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INScape

featuring U64



Super Mario Kart R

Mixing Ultra 64's hi-res graphics with tried 'n' trusted gameplay, four-player kart-racing looks set to be the main event once again

Format: **Ultra 64**

Publisher: **Nintendo**

Developer: **Nintendo**

Release Date: **TBA**

Origin: **Japan**

The original *Super Mario Kart* still stands as one of the best games ever released for the Super NES, and it looks like the new *Super Mario*

Kart R will carry on the proud tradition. Designed by Nintendo's game guru Shigeru Miyamoto, this go-kart racer never deviates far from the original formula, but improves on enough key points to guarantee sales to every owner of Ultra 64 hardware.

As the only game in the launch lineup to take advantage of Ultra 64's high-res mode, *Super Mario Kart R* has a visual impact that's truly amazing. As beautiful as many Super NES games were, they were restricted for most applications to a resolution of 256x224, although if the developers were willing to drop to a 16-color palette, the machine could show certain images at 512x448. *Super Mario Kart R* will display high-speed tracks at a full 640x480 resolution, and by combining 15 bits per pixel (the



Familiar characters from the *Mario* universe are your opponents in this fast-paced and enormously addictive racing game

machine is actually capable of more), designers can display up to 32,000 colors at once.

In addition to giving the game a facelift, the developers have also added a few new gameplay features that fans will most definitely appreciate. Hills and dips have been added, adding a third dimension to the formerly flat-planed game, a feature that forces players to be even more careful on unfamiliar courses if they don't wish to end up off-road. At least one new character has been added (Wario), presumably with his own bag of dirty tricks to slow down competitors.

More important (and impressive) than all of this is the addition of a four-player split-screen mode that takes full



advantage of U64's four-port design.

Rather than step far outside the boundaries of its original success, Nintendo has taken the conservative approach and produced a game that — at this early stage at least — looks as if it stresses quality of gameplay over innovation. Given its strategy of limited software releases for the Ultra 64, the rock-solid gameplay and tried and trusted racing action is probably the smartest bet.

ng



If Nintendo is able to capture the feel of the original, U64 will have another classic

WING COMMANDER

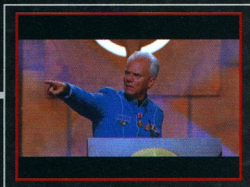
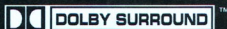
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WaveRacer

F-Zero for the 64-bit age? Let's hope so. Real wave physics and high-speed racing are at the core of this powerboat game



Avoiding the wake of competitors is a crucial part of gameplay as real-world physics were used to generate the game's wave mechanics

T

he premier titles for the Ultra 64 are for the most part following a simple, but effective formula: Produce high-powered

sequels to classic Super NES titles that show off what the new machine has to offer. *Wave Race 64* does a fine job of doing just that. By following in the footsteps of *F-Zero*, Mr. Miyamoto has refitted his vision of the ultimate racing game with high-speed animation, real-world physics, multiplayer action, and plenty of graphics wizardry.

From a gameplay standpoint, the difference between the two games is readily apparent. *Wave Race 64* takes place entirely on beautifully rendered water courses, while players control high-powered jet boats designed to weave through the game's treacherous turns and steep jumps. New also are the



game's real world physics, a fantastically detailed system of movement and response algorithms that enable players to jump over waves, to cut off other players and leave them bogged down in a wake, and to slide completely realistically over the water. All of this is made



Check out the camera view as a powerboat comes at you (above left). Another game with the Miyamoto stamp of approval, *Wave Race* will join *Super Mario Kart R* and *Cruis'n USA* as U64's answer to *Wipeout* and *Daytona USA*

Format:	Ultra 64
Publisher:	Nintendo
Developer:	Nintendo
Release Date:	TBA
Origin:	Japan

possible by Ultra 64's reliance on its graphics coprocessor to do the heavy display work of a game, leaving the 100 MHz CPU free to worry about game mechanics and physical modeling.

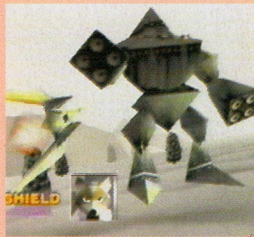
Even so, *Wave Race 64* does use up a great deal of what the U64 has to offer graphics programmers. The reflective sheen of the water is made possible by the system's built-in environment mapping feature, the same tool responsible for the realistic landscapes in *Pilotwings 64*. Instead of merely reflecting everything on the surface of the water back down the screen, *Wave Race 64* displays the water as a translucent substance, and as players rush through the game, they also will be able to make out the bases of sunken buildings and more underneath the waves.

Although this game tends, like many of the other games shown at Shoshinkai, to follow the path already laid down by the Super NES, *Wave Race 64* still promises to be one of the finest and most beautiful racing games to ever grace home screens.

ng

featuring **U64**

Star Fox 64



Original game developers Argonaut had nothing to do with *Star Fox 64*. Nintendo handled the project exclusively in house



till in the very early stages of development, the Ultra installment of the Super NES classic *Star Fox* looks like it will take players off the rail-

movement of the original and into a fully interactive 3D world.

Although very little of the game was actually shown, it looks like the title will have a brilliant cockpit view and the familiar and original cast of animal heroes. Like Saturn and PlayStation before it, it seems that Ultra 64 is leading players more and more toward an open field of play, leaving behind the 2D and locked-motion games of the '80s behind.

ng

Format: **Ultra 64**

Publisher: **Nintendo**

Developer: **Nintendo**

Release Date: **TBA**

Origin: **Japan**



Body Harvest

Format: **Ultra 64**

Publisher: **Nintendo**

Developer: **DMA Design**

Release Date: **TBA**

Origin: **UK**

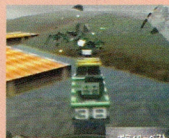


ne of the most difficult games to gauge was DMA Design's very incomplete action title *Body Harvest*. The basic premise of this new title

pits characters against a threatening alien invasion (yes, again...) who attempt to steal humans for nefarious purposes. Controlling a surprisingly tiny character, players hop from tanks to choppers to hovercraft, looking to initiate a solid counter-strike.

The massive selection of arms on offer could make this title a real long-term play hit, especially if the company can bring to bear the gameplay expertise that made *Lemmings* such a hit.

ng



What you can't see here is the beautiful undulation of the waves and the boat gently rocking

If the jumping in and out of various combat vehicles is as easy in practice as it seems during DMA Design's video footage, then this could be a classic game. The robots are cool, also (above)



Buggy Boogie

Format: **Ultra 64**
 Publisher: **Nintendo**
 Developer: **Angel Studios**
 Release Date: **TBA**
 Origin: **USA**

Another Nintendo original in collaboration with Angel Studios is *Buggy Boogie*, putting players into cars that they design themselves from a list of custom parts to be subsequently dropped into combat with other cars.

So far, the list of component parts looks pretty impressive, including strange winches and projectile weaponry. Graphics were impressive, detailing craft that end up looking like strange combinations of hard-core machinery and biological parts.

Although at first glance this title may seem to be little more than *Bump and Jump* revisited, there seems to be a lot of hidden depth.



The object of the game is simple: destroy your opponent's cars with your own customized buggy. Quite how the game involves "boogying" is unknown.

Driving games aren't very big in Japan (hence no *Cruis'n USA* at Shoshinkai), but this could hit the mark.

Ultra 64 games

All these games are currently in development for Ultra 64. The suffix (BD) indicates that the game will be for exclusive use with the Nintendo "Bulky Drive" add-on.

Ace Driver	Namco
Alien Trilogy	Acclaim
Blastozer	Nintendo/Rare
Body Harvest	Nintendo/DMA Design
Buggie-Boogie	Nintendo/Angel Studios
Creator	Nintendo/Software Creations
Cruis'n USA	Nintendo/Williams
Dragon Quest VII (BD)	Enix
FIFA Soccer '97	EA Sports
Final Fantasy VII (BD)	Squaresoft
Frank Thomas Big Hurt Baseball	Acclaim
Goldeneye 007	Nintendo/Rare
John Madden Football	EA Sports
Ken Griffey Jr. Baseball	Nintendo
Killer Instinct 2	Nintendo/Rare
Kirby Bowl 64	Nintendo
Mission: Impossible	Ocean
Monster Dunk	Mindscape
Mortal Kombat 3	Williams
Phear	Nintendo/H2O
Pilotwings 64	Nintendo/Paradigm
Prey	Apogee/3D Realms
Quake	id Software
Red Baron	Sierra Online
Robotech Academy	Gametek
Shadows of the Empire	LucasArts
Soul Storm	Virtual Hollywood
Stacker	Virgin
Starfox 64	Nintendo
Super Mario 64	Nintendo
Super Mario Kart R	Nintendo
The Legend of Zelda (BD)	Nintendo
Top Gun	Spectrum Hologate
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter	Acclaim
Ultra Doom	Williams
Ultra FX Fighter	GTE
Wave Race 64	Nintendo
Wayne Gretzky Hockey	Time Warner

Golden Eye 007

Format: **Ultra 64**
 Publisher: **Nintendo**
 Developer: **Rare**
 Release Date: **TBA**
 Origin: **UK**



Another movie conversion title to come out of Shoshinkai was *Rare's Goldeneye 007*.

As would be

expected from the veteran developers, the game looks incredible, but the play style could well be the big winner in the long run. The game seems to combine the first-person freedom of motion interface of *Doom* with the target-style shooting play of *Virtua Cop* with all backgrounds rendered on the fly for complete freedom of motion.

Control movement with the cross-pad on the U64 joystick while using the other analog joystick to aim weapons. If all of this works as planned, it will be a major step forward for the *Doom* clone, and a load of fun as well.



The Ultra 64's first first-person shooter, *007* is a (wait for it!) *Doom*-style world, except with polygon scenery that Rare assures is rendered on the fly.



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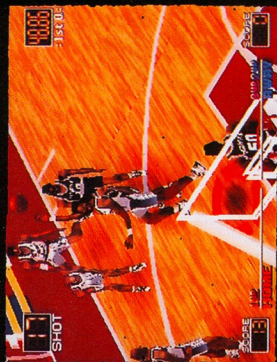
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PSSSTT!



WANNA BUY A
GAME SYSTEM?

Sega and Sony are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a day trying to sell *you* their hardware. Both face a variety of obstacles, not the least of which is determining just who *you* are. So what are their strategies? How did they know where to find you? And how did they make the most of the 30 seconds in which they had your attention? A **NEXT Generation** report...



What's at stake in the 32-bit videogame market? According to a study conducted by Robertson, Stephens &

Company, there will be more than 17 million 32- and 64-bit game systems sold through 1997. That's a lot of revenue in hardware sales, but more significantly, since videogame hardware is generally sold

marketing

SONY

Who do they think you are?

What if you made a cool new game machine, but no one wanted to buy it? Having done its homework, Sony doesn't intend to find out. Here's who they figure are its customers...

Before Sony could begin making ads, designing campaigns and (hopefully) selling PlayStations, it had to determine who its target was. This task was more difficult for Sony than say Sega or Nintendo because it had no previous experience in the game industry. And before it decided who it was going to sell its PlayStation to, it had to learn what sort of people play videogames in the first place.

Partly because it started this research process with no preconceptions, it arrived at a conclusion at variance with that reached by Sega. Although conventional wisdom may tell us that Sega and Sony are targeting the exact same group, their own perceptions of that group are quite different.

"One of the first things we resolved early on was that everyone is 17 when

they play videogames," says Lee Clow, chairman and CCO, North America at Chiat-Day, Sony's advertising agency. "The young people look up to the best gamer who is usually a little older and more practiced and talented. Then there are people who start working and grow up, but when they go into their room and sit down with their videogames, they're regressing and becoming 17 again."

"When we look at the marketplace we want to be the leader in, we realize that we need to take handfuls of share from Sega and Nintendo," adds Chip Herman, vice president of marketing at Sony Computer Entertainment. "That's a very well-



understand what people's motivations are. And as we look at consumers, we realize that their attitudes and the way they thought about the experience of playing videogames was that everyone is 17 when they play."

One thing apparent to anyone who has seen Sony's advertisements is that it certainly does not go in for minimalism. "[Gamers] have grown up with television, and have a greater ability to consume visual and audio information than older people," continues Clow.

"Our customers are savvy, they don't liked to be advertised to, they can smell advertising a mile away. They don't want to be told how they should feel," adds Herman. "Ultimately, we realize there is an attitude in the elements of gameplay and we have to recognize and understand that this attitude is the real motivator. That's the relationship we need to use to build Sony."

ng



American Football and heavily-armored helicopters. Certainly there's nothing revolutionary in Sony's ideas concerning the sort of material that turns gamers on. So do you feel like you're 17 when you play games? Sony thinks so

defined group that generally is 12 to 24 years of age. That's where the concentration of purchases are in the marketplace. But it would have been short-sighted and misleading if we had left the analysis at counting noses rather than really trying to

at or near manufacturing costs, it foretells massive amounts of revenue from the vastly more profitable sale of software, both from exclusive first party releases as well as from manufacturing and royalty payments from third party developers. Hardware manufacturers can look forward to hundreds of millions of dollars in profit over the next few years, but only if people buy their system.

So Sony and Sega are currently engaged in a head-to-head battle. What

else is new? NEXT Generation has written a lot about the two companies' hardware and games. But in this feature, we lift the lid on how they try to convince you — the gamer — to choose their system over their rivals'.

This is where the marketing departments comes in. Having superior products is meaningless without the right marketing — just look at Sony's Betamax debacle or the Macintosh-MS-DOS wars for proof of that.

Although Sega and Sony are both are ostensibly going after the same market, each has a surprisingly different concept of the makeup of that market, and consequently, a different strategy for reaching those consumers. NEXT Generation spoke with the people behind the marketing efforts at both Sega and Sony. Presented here, in their own words, are Sega's and Sony's plans for reaching you, the videogame consumer.

SEGA

Who do they think you are?

Having already fought the 16-bit war, Sega knows a lot about the people who play Genesis; how old they are and what room they play in. But who does Sega think will spend \$299 on a Saturn?

Unlike Sony, Sega has had years of experience marketing home videogame systems. That didn't make its task of determining the target audience for Saturn any easier — in fact, it may have complicated it. Attempting to juggle Saturn with Genesis and 32X and trying to determine a viable target that would guarantee a predictable revenue stream from each was no picnic. Sega's solution? The same as Sony's. Spend millions on market research.

"It's not just asking, 'what games do you like?' and 'where do you live?' and that kind of thing," says Dan Stevens, manager of corporate PR at Sega. "It includes things like the psychology of children and what their brains are capable of. A kid at a certain age can't

see the difference between a 16-bit and 32-bit game. So it goes beyond what's currently happening in the market and how we respond, to digging into the insides of consumers to figure out what they want and need."

"In terms of marketing, the target audience for the Saturn is 18 to 34," says Tim Dunley, self-proclaimed marketing zealot at Sega. Are they ceding the younger audience to Nintendo or Sony? "Not at all," he continues. "But if we target a message at 14 year olds, we lose the people who are older. When we target the older groups, then the people who either aspire to be a little bit older or can just appreciate cool things no matter how old they are, we get them, too. If [the ad] is cool, and if it's cutting edge, you get this inspirational influence."

"You can't really place ads that will target purely the group we consider our strongest target — 18 to 24," he continues. "You really have to hit that group and older. But, in fact, our strongest awareness is with those under 18."

"You hear all about Generation X and how they are suspicious of



Sega pegged its hopes for a strong holiday season on the success of four key titles — *Sega Rally*, *World Series Baseball*, *Virtua Cop*, and *VF-2*. Sega's aggressive marketing reflected its belief that these are the titles that gamers like you want to play

advertising," says Elaine Starling, director of media and product placement at Sega. "Yet all of the information that we have and in all our focus groups, we see that they are looking for information in advertising. They aren't responsive at all to the branding advertising," (like Microsoft's "Where do you want to go today?" ads). She continues, "They're like 'great... why should I care!'"

"I think people at Sega are realizing we're not just competing with another game platform — we're competing against TV. You could either be watching 'Seinfeld' or 'ER,' or playing a game. So our marketing has to be done fully aware of that," concludes Stevens. **ng**



Both Sega and Sony face a myriad of challenges to the success of their systems, some are shared, some unique to each. The biggest question, of course, particularly to pundits predicting doom for the videogame industry, is this: is there a market for systems at the \$300+ price range at all? Can anyone succeed as dramatically as Sega and Nintendo did in the late 1980s 16-bit realm, but with higher-priced game systems that cost almost three times the price of the

16-bit consoles? And how will these "kids" possibly afford these systems?

It's time for some myth debunking.

17 million 32- & 64-bit game systems will be sold through 1997

First, no one is marketing these systems to kids. The demographic target for the next generation systems roughly

parallels that of "Generation X" — people who were personally affected more by *Star Wars* than the Vietnam War — but there's more to it than that. Think about this: The Atari 2600 cost \$200 when it was released. The Intellivision cost \$300. Adjusting for inflation, an Atari 2600 that sold for \$200 in 1977 would cost \$497 today. The Intellivision? \$541. Both sold millions of units, but to the Baby Boomer demographic group.

marketing

SONY

TV: Turn on, tune in, buy hardware

TV may be the way that the majority of Sony's target audience were introduced to the concept of buying a PlayStation. So how did it persuade people to part with \$300 in just 30 seconds?



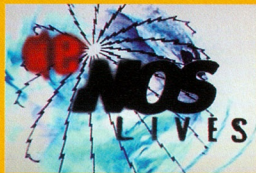
hort of actually playing, the best way to get a feel for a game is watching it being played — something that can only be done on a TV.

Thus advertising videogames on TV seems like the perfect solution.

On the downside, however, TV advertising is far more expensive than print, and you have less time to convey information. Thus, TV advertising is one of the most challenging — and risky — components in any marketing campaign.

In promoting PlayStation, Sony faced the additional challenge of reaching consumers who had no idea that it was introducing a game platform — let alone that it was the right one to buy. Sony's solution: a series of ads that feature post-MTV style micro-cuts, hidden information, and a harsh techno soundtrack.

"One of our early conclusions was that games are the center of

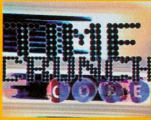


The clandestine transmission theme is omnipresent in the ads, as are cryptic codes

consumers' relationship with this new product. The hardware is only a means to an end, so it wasn't about introducing them to a new platform, it was about taking games to the next level. That is the way to connect," says Lee Clow, Sony's CCO.

"Our objective is to give consumers a trial experience with our product every time they come in contact with it," says Chip Herman, vp at SCE. "I think, frankly, two years ago, people hid the games on TV. In a 30-second spot, the game itself might not have been all that compelling. In these new games, with 3D visual effects and CD-quality sound, I think TV works extremely well in conveying the experience of the gameplay. It's all about the game. Everything about the ad is about the game."

"It seems like the more smart and challenging we can make the advertising, the more we'll be in sync with what kids demand of the games," says Clow. "And that's more the place where we come from in our ads, where we start with a number of almost incomplete pieces of communication that make the audience get interested, curious, and want to



Sony's TV ad campaign is characterized by quick cuts and information overload. To see all the images flashed on the screen, including game codes, you need a VCR with a credible single-frame advance. Associate Creative Directors on the project at Chiat-Day are Chuck Bennet and Clay Williams



discover what's the next piece of the puzzle, what's the next thing we're going to say to them. We went for a kind of viral underground thing, with messages like "U R NOT e." They're being rebels of information that's kind of buried there beneath the surface, whether it's a

Karen Ritchie, author of *Marketing To Generation X* and senior vice president at GM Mediaworks in Detroit, says, "I think that Gen X has more purchasing power than Boomers had at the same age — Boomers, in their 20s, were married with kids, or in the army. Women were working for less money. Boomers today probably have more money on the whole, but members of Gen X spend more per capita, particularly on consumer electronics."

So how do Sega and Sony reach their target market? "The model is really print, radio, TV, editorial, and PR.

Gen Xers were affected more by Star Wars than by the Vietnam War

You build awareness and that's about all you can do — you can't really close the sale," says Tim Dunley, marketing zealot

(yup, real title) at Sega. Getting coverage in the videogame and popular press is important, but it can't do everything. First, a large portion of the target audience just doesn't read, period. And second, editorial coverage isn't always positive (at least in NEXT Generation).

So how do companies let consumers know that their system is the best, and worth the money? In a word, advertising — whether print,

game code or other pieces of information to be discovered. If the kids take the time and slow down the TV ads, they can discover a number of layers of information way down in there."

"The ads are difficult to comprehend the first time through. Your eyes and mind recognize that there are things you're missing," says Herman. "You want to go back and look at it again. It's similar to a videogame where you realize that you're passing things you don't know the meaning of yet. It's very challenging. Like the tag line 'You are not ready,' it's the ultimate challenge. Gamers love to respond to that tag line and say 'Bullshit. Let me show you how ready I am.'"

"'You are not ready' is the ultimate challenge. Gamers love to respond to that tag line and say 'Bullshit. Let me show you how ready I am.'"

Chip Herman, Sony Computer Entertainment

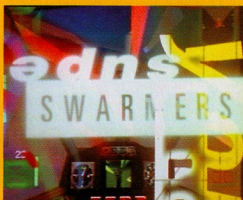
to solve the puzzles in the ads. They're just going to take a little bit longer.

"In our marketing plans we were looking to find those people who could discover things on their own. The real



The hip look and near subliminal messages flashing by in Sony's TV ads try to capture the attention of gamers

Is Sony worried about losing the casual gamer who finds the ads too challenging? "I don't think that will be the case at all," says Herman. "The casual gamer is going to be just as interested in trying



Gameplay shots are a key part of Sony's TV ads, as are a multitude of challenges to gamers. "The good news is these games kick serious butt — the bad news is you're the butt," intones one. The strategy of challenging gamers is key to Sony's campaign to woo hard-core early adopters

hard-core gamer is immediately going to buy the system and go home, play it, and talk about it. That person will pass the message about Sony's game play to all the rest in the most powerful way possible — from friend to friend."

How has the reaction to the TV ads been? "One of the best comments we've gotten [in focus groups] was that when they watch the TV ads they felt like they were going to feel when they play the games," says Haven Dubrul, marketing product director at Sony.

"Finally," Herman concludes, "it's all about the game. There's nothing in the ads that brings anything to bear other than an experience with the product. In focus groups and research when we play the ads we watch kids stop for a minute and think about what they've seen. They're going, 'I've gotta deal with this.' It makes them participate mentally and emotionally with our product, that's what we set out to do."



TV, interactive kiosks, point-of-purchase promotions, movie trailers, free postcards in bars, anything and everything companies can think of to build awareness. "No one admits they are influenced by ads," says Ritchie, "particularly Generation X. But the truth is, no one is immune to ads, either. If it wasn't for ads you might not even know about a lot of products' existence. By and large, Generation X is allergic to hype, but if your advertisements can

demonstrate some truthful benefit to the consumer [in the case of videogame systems, the potential to play fun games] then they will respond."

The market is there; 3D0, hampered by astronomically high prices, poor software, and a marketing strategy that stressed educational multimedia and PhotoCD access over games, couldn't reach it. Neither could Philips with largely the same strategy. Even Atari's Jaguar, clearly a game machine,

was just as clearly a miss in the war for next generation dominance. Can Sega and Sony do what 3D0, Philips, and Atari failed to do?

Sega's done it before. Its *Welcome to the Next Level* campaign for Genesis established it as the system to own, attracting upgrades from the 8-bit NES, convincing consumers that the Super NES was a toy, and singlehandedly revolutionizing the way videogames were marketed.

marketing

SEGA

TV: Turn on, tune in, buy hardware

Sega's TV ads for Genesis were bold, shocking, and fresh. Many credit its TV campaign for winning the war against Nintendo. So how does Sega top 16-bit perfection in the 32-bit arena?

Despite all the criticism Sega has taken over the last year or so — for Sega CD, the 32X, the high price and initial weakness of Saturn's software library — one thing that no one has ever found fault with is its TV ads. Developed in conjunction with its award-winning ad agency, Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, (also developers of the phenomenally successful "got milk?" campaign) Sega's TV ads have never been anything short of amazing.

It pioneered the shock tactics and the quick-cut, in-your-face style now used by everyone — not least Nintendo. And that's Sega's biggest problem. Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but whenever the staid Nintendo blatantly rips off your ad campaign, some of the punch with your target audience is lost. The "Welcome to the Next Level" and

"SEGA!" campaigns were stunning. To top shock, Sega has to move the ads in an entirely new direction. But how?

"It's tough because we kind of set the standard," says Tim Dunley, marketing zealot at Sega, "and now we have to redefine what the standard is. We had a challenge evolving from the 16-bit Genesis world because we were the in-your-face, aggressive young male. We were all about testosterone.

"Now we're upscale, cooler, more sophisticated. We're evolving the

"Our old ads were 'MTV.' Our new ads are 'ER' or 'NYPD Blue'"

Tim Dunley: Sega of America

imagery of the brand. Continuing the higher-ground marketing, very upscale, very smart, very Nike-esque ads. And we're focusing on real-world types of things that happen outside the game. For instance, the guy who cleans up the ring after a *Virtual Fighter 2* match reaches down, finds something, picks it up and realizes it's a human tooth.


"The commercials are really kind of surreal. They're a little bit disturbing, more realistic, more cinematic, and it pulls at emotions instead of trying to make you laugh. They set the context for the game screens and then reveal them at the end, so the game screen is like the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence. The campaign is called "A



Back to basics? Sega's latest TV ads explicitly state Saturn's new lower price

Little too Real!" These spots are kind of our reaction to the fact that you get almost as much realism out the games as you do out of watching a real television show," concludes Dunley.

"Thirty-two-bit games are so much more immersive with 3D graphics and stereo sound, we're trying to capture that feeling with the ads," says Sarah Richmond, product evangelist at Sega, adding, "Theater of the Eye [the launch campaign] did that also, but from a different perspective. It was just sort of maniacal reactions inside your body and this is more actually trying to capture the feeling you have when playing the game." Adds Dunley, "Theater of the Eye was like a transitional ad. It's kind of humorous, but it is still disturbing.

"These ads play much more on emotion than some of our ads in the past, in direct relation to the actual play on emotions that you get from the games," Dunley explains. "But they aren't in the same vein as old Sega ads" adds Dan Stevens. Dunley concludes, "Our old spots were like 'MTV,' and our new spots are like 'ER' or 'NYPD Blue.'" 



The Theater of the Eye campaign was Sega's last barrage of shock-tactics style ads

It's almost impossible today to even find a videogame ad that doesn't owe something to Sega's shock-tactics marketing innovations. The same style of marketing even managed to sell a respectable number of Sega CD and 32X systems, that, objectively, sucked.

Of course, this puts Sega in an extremely difficult position. How do you follow up the best videogame marketing campaign in history, especially when everyone else is doing the exact same

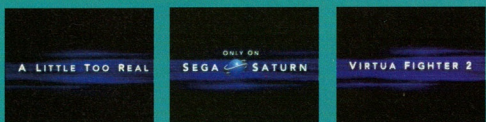
thing? Not with more of the same, that's for sure. Shock tactics are as tired now as they were fresh when they were first introduced — something that most of the industry seems to have missed, judging by the current ads in the market. "We have to continue to be fresh and different," says Dunley. "And that may or may not mean Sega screams, or quick cuts of game footage, or stuff where you feel like some kid's going to yell at you at the end of the commercial. We're

moving in a different direction."

Saturn's early lackluster sales are more likely due to the initial price of the system, combined with the lack of quality software, than due to poor marketing. "If there's one piece of learning we can take from [the introduction of Saturn] it's that you have to commit yourself to being at the same price as your competitors," says Mike Robero, executive vice president of marketing at Sega.



Storyboards, left, show planning stages of ads from the "Too Real" campaign. The ads mark a new direction for the leader in videogame advertising and are darker and more somber in tone than previous Goodby efforts for Sega. Care was taken, for example, to make sure the mountain climbers weren't too "Mountain Dew dude-ish." Creative Director on the ads was Jeff Goodby, Copywriter: Paul Venables, Art Director: Jeremy Postaer, Producer: Kim Noble. At Sega, Sara Holihan is the director of advertising and video production



All the "A Little Too Real" commercials have the same basic format: real world video setup followed by a split-second of gameplay and then the cutlines, *A Little Too Real* and *Only on Sega Saturn*. The spots are 15 seconds so they'll be grouped in pods. "We're really going to have to blanket everywhere," says Tim Dunley. That doesn't include kids' shows — "some of the spots aren't kid legal," says Dunley. It's true. Sega and Goodby have certainly succeeded in their quest to make the ads more disturbing than previous efforts; particularly the cinematic *Virtua Cop* spot, which features two cops walking blindly into what appears to be a fatal ambush

"Especially in America, price is everything. The consumer counts every dollar and a \$100 price difference is a huge consideration. We had an uphill battle in getting the message out that Saturn's price had dropped to \$299." However, early sales indicators reported that in the three days after the new \$100 price-drop advertisements appeared, sales increased dramatically. "We're finally getting the message out there," explains Robero.

To some, the early launch of Saturn seems like a classic marketing blunder. Would Sega do it again? "I think so."

To some, the early Saturn launch seemed a classic blunder

says Neil Cohen, vice president of marketing and corporate communications at Sega. "Being out

early, we didn't have all the quality software we could have, and Sony beat us with price and had some great looking product. But if we had launched in September, head-to-head, \$399 vs. \$299, we would be looking at an installed base now of maybe 20,000, not 120,000."

Adds Robero, "We launched early with the full belief that Sony would launch in June or July; but also, we saw that there were a significant

marketing

SONY

And when you're not watching TV...

Advertising and marketing doesn't stop when you switch off the TV. The Internet, point-of-purchase, and print ads are all an essential part of the marketing mix for Sony's media assault

While television may be the most exciting and expensive element of Sony's and Sega's marketing efforts, it's far from the only one. Here's a rundown on some of the other ways Sony is building brand awareness in the videogame arena.

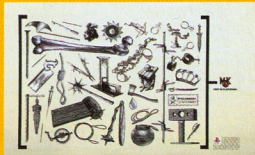
Print

"The print environment is a real challenging one which I believe we have to find some fresh ways to operate in," says Lee Clow, CCO at Sony. "We have to find a way to make sure the ads don't just repeat the editorial."

"In some of the earliest print advertising we did," continues Chip Herman, vp at SCE. "We showed these huge screen-shots and a lot of people from magazines called us and said, 'Hey, these screen-shots are pixilated.' And we



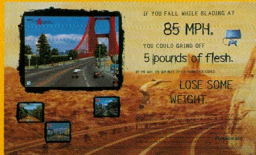
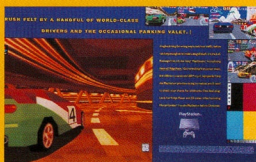
Sony's in-store banners continue to challenge the gamer, emphasizing the Sony name to help woo less "with-it" gift buyers



Putting large screen-shots in ads was Sony's attempt to attract the attention of jaded gamers. The ads emphasize software, not hardware, a strategy that seems to be paying off. At Chiat-Day (Sony's agency): Art Director: Doug Mukai; Copy Writer: Jay Cranford

said 'yeah, they're the screen-shots.' But when the kids saw this, they realized they were the real shots and they were so turned on their reaction was 'I've hated all of those other print ads where it was art, we knew they were retouching those, but this is the real thing.' This is very honest. This is what it's all about."

Continuing the theme of 'challenging' ads, hidden codes and cryptic game hints are consciously buried into the miniscule legal copy at the page's bottom or worked into the pictures via Adobe Photoshop.



Internet

"It's an important part of our marketing mix," says Haven Dubrul, marketing product director at Sony. "Who has access to the Net is a question we are all trying to answer, but we know it's a more narrow target than we can reach through print or TV."

"We have a PlayStation website as part of the Sony Corporate online site, and we update it every day. We have a pretty large game gallery where people can find out anything they want to find out about our games, see previews for current or upcoming games, and we

number of people who were 'brand insensitive,' and just waiting to buy anything that would deliver the 32-bit gaming experience." Says Cohen, "Did we upset some people? Absolutely. But knowing what we were able to do at the time, it was the right thing to do."

What about Sony? You don't become a multibillion dollar corporation without good marketing. But while Sony's hardware prowess — epitomized by Ken Kutaragi's elegant design of

PlayStation itself — cannot be doubted, Sony's abilities in the entertainment industry certainly were not at all

Sony garnered key exclusivity deals with titles like MK3

impressive before the introduction of PlayStation. It managed to lose close to a billion dollars on a movie studio, and

Sony Imagesoft produced few titles that ever rose above the mediocre.

Thus, Sony's challenges were a little more defined than Sega's. Rather than figuring out how to get gamers to go to the next level, Sony had to first convince hard-core gamers that PlayStation would have the quality titles to make the Imagesoft legacy nothing more than a bad memory. More than that, though, it had the unenviable task of convincing every



In store cardboard standups (top left) and brochures (left) try to emphasize the breadth and depth of the exclusive game library for PlayStation. The license plate was a spoof given to members of the press and retail community to promote the game *Twisted Metal* prior to its release.



have a 'what's hot?' section that's updated every day of the week. There's also a game on the website called 'Adventure With an Attitude' that you can play to uncover info about PlayStation and win a Sony hat or a T-Shirt.

"Overall, [the website] is one more place where we are able to disseminate information about our products and get feedback instantaneously from consumers on our products."

Point of Purchase

"Number one, we want it to be integrated with everything else that we're doing: with our home page, with our print advertising," says Dubrul. "We want to have a consistent feel in communication, and to communicate the differentiation of our games versus the competition. I think we've done a great job of communicating this in the [in store, 'point-of-purchase' material]."

"What we want to do is draw the attention of our target audience to PlayStation and the games. We also want to be able to communicate to other shoppers, to possibly mothers, fathers, or to their grandparents who are sent to

the stores to buy the game system for someone as a holiday gift. We want to be able to communicate quickly the power of PlayStation."

"One of the most important parts of the point-of-purchase material at the retail level is to support the Sony brand name," reveals Chip Herman. "The gift purchases from mom or dad may need a little support from that. Sony is brand name they are going to recognize. They've grown up with Sony products, and they know Sony means quality."

"In fact," Herman concludes, "we've found they're relieved, to some degree, that Sony is in the videogame category because Nintendo and Sega haven't been brands they've had a relationship with."



Building brand awareness is key; expect to see the PlayStation logo everywhere it can be stitched, screened, or printed

potential consumer (of which hard-core gamers are only a small part) that Sony, a name most associated with high-end TVs and the Walkman was a legitimate videogame hardware company.

How? Again, with games. With no hot arcade division to provide conversion fodder, no in-house development to speak of, and no history in the business, except a failed Super NES CD add-on deal, before Sony could do much in the way of marketing individual titles, it needed to

create some demand for its software.

The fledgling videogame division didn't have the consumer base or the brand recognition of its competitor. This left the executives at Sony with two options. First, they could generate enough quality in-house titles to turn around the damage done to Sony's name by earlier Imagesoft titles, or second, the company could make some serious deals with third party developers to ensure that the titles that people wanted to play

were only going to be available on PlayStation.

Sony's solution? Do both. Sony bought UK development house Psygnosis outright, launched an aggressive in-house development program, and garnered key exclusivity deals with hot arcade publishers like Williams and Namco. By the time the system launched in September 1995, the company had enough quality games lined up for the holiday season

marketing

SEGA

And when you're not watching TV...

"Guerrilla marketing" is playing a role in Sega's non-TV advertising efforts to establish Saturn as hipper than its rivals. Will the style vote be enough to win the war against PlayStation?



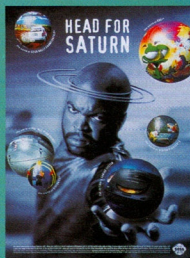
Like Sony, Sega isn't relying on TV alone to get its message across. In addition to a rather aggressive "guerrilla marketing" campaign that's putting Bug! postcards in bars and cafes nationwide and plastering Bug! posters along side those of rock stars on urban construction sites everywhere, Sega is pursuing more traditional strategies as well.

Print

"Print is very different from TV," says Sega's Tim Dunley. "And realizing their differences, they're equally important. The TV is totally visceral. You can show how fluid *Virtua Fighter 2* is. You can show what is actually going on in *Virtua Cop*. You can't do that in

print. Print is really more image and straight-line communication as to what the product is, what the product does. It's kind of the 'trust us as we tell you about it,' as opposed to 'let us show you what we can do.' Print has always been important in this industry for the

enthusiastic folks. With Saturn, though, we've really broadened it out to include a lot of the consumer books. We're trying to get as much reach as possible, to try and get as many people exposed as possible. We're doing stuff with *Rolling Stone*



Launch ads were designed to stand out from the pack (above). Recent ads have featured celebrities or emphasized the new lower price and exclusive titles



to launch a campaign based not largely on image, like Sega's Theater of the Mind, but almost entirely on product. Its lower price point, larger number of titles available at launch, and pre-sales programs enabled the massive company to get an early lead on Sega.

Although the first 500,000 or million systems sold hopefully will represent only a small portion of the ultimate installed base of each system, the importance of this early headstart

cannot be underestimated. Early sales are key to maintaining good relationships with retailers as no one will push a system that doesn't sell well out of the gate. Poor initial sales can also result in poorly maintained interactive kiosks, and worse, negative recommendations from sales clerks. Early numbers are also important in getting third parties to develop for the system, beyond introductory efforts started on the basis of hardware and



In-store displays concentrate hard on exclusive Sega titles. Sega's arcade division is its biggest marketing ally

magazine, *Details*, *Playboy*, *Wired*, and *The Net*. People who buy **NEXT Generation** typically can read about Sega Saturn and are aware of it, but in the mainstream consumer books it gives us a chance to reach people who might not necessarily be as tuned in."

Are they willing to concede the hard-core gamer to someone else, in return for getting the mainstream dollar? "No, no," says Dunley. "The hard-core gamers are the trailblazers. They set trends. The core segment really sets where we're going, and everybody else, the late adopters and mainstream consumers, follow."

Internet

"On September 6, 1995, we completely renewed our web site, and we get about 200,000 hits a day," says Aimee

promises. More importantly, numbers build a buzz that money can't buy.

"When you have a product introduction that is being so closely watched by the media, early numbers tend to feed media frenzy, which in turn breeds greater numbers," explains Mike Robero. But despite the significant early lead of PlayStation, it certainly isn't time to count Sega out. In the 16-bit era, it wasn't uncommon for Sega to lose in sales volume to

Cardwell, webmaster at Sega. "It's more than 650 pages and there's a lot of database functions behind it that allow people to get information on specific games or categories very easily. There are both first and third party games featured, with videos for about 50% of them, so you can get a lot of info.

"There's also three chat boards and a BBS. The bulletin board questions are sometimes actually answered by the executive, which is pretty neat. One of the biggest benefits is that we answer every email to the webmaster personally, more than 11,050 since September 6. It's a great one-on-one relationship. We also monitor the rec.games.video.sega [usenet site]. The players really like to have a Sega representative they can talk to."

Point of Purchase

"It's extremely important to us to have a strong presence on-site, to trigger that awareness — 'oh yeah, *Virtua Fighter 2*, that's the game I want!'" says Tim Dunley. "Our in-store stuff is picking up the 'A Little too Real' tag, but the focus is really on showing the characters from each of the four key exclusive Saturn games, *Virtua Fighter 2*, *Virtua Cop*, *Sega Rally*, and *World Series Baseball*.

"We're trying to say 'they're here!' and 'Saturn's the only place to get them,'



Press releases for *Virtua Cop* featured targets with bullet holes. Promotional videos came packed in a faux Saturn box

while bringing in the 'A Little too Real' to keep the look constant.

"We have an in-store demo program where on weekends there'll actually be Sega people working in the store to answer questions and help people, and to make sure the stores are set up properly, and that the posters are up, and that the software isn't all stacked together so you can't see anything.

"I've gone into a mall software store and asked what system to get if I want to play baseball and the guy just doesn't like baseball. And he's telling me something I don't want to hear, like 'well, you'll really like this RPG.' So we want somebody there who will speak better for Sega."

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The calendar and *Sonic Times* are retail marketing tools. Saturn's early release hurt Sega's reputation among retailers; maybe a polygon pinup will fix it



Nintendo for nine months of the year, but then come on strong at the end. What's important is that the months it did sell more, October, November, and December, were the months when the most hardware and software were sold. Sega is certainly hoping to see that trend repeat in the 32-bit arena and is concentrating all its marketing efforts on showcasing exclusive titles through the holiday season. Still, nothing succeeds like success, and Sony is just as keen on

continuing its own presently successful marketing efforts and solidifying its dominance of the 32-bit realm.

What's important is that Sega sells more units in December

What's next? It's telling that while both Sega and Sony are open with their plans through the first few months of

'96, neither is keen to discuss plans for April and beyond, when Ultra 64 enters the race. While Nintendo's marketing strategy for new systems has basically been, "Buy this system and you'll get a new *Mario* game," Sega and Sony know the day Ultra 64 ships, everything changes.

And they'll have to change, particularly if either company wants to come out on top for the winter holiday in 1996.

ng

“ 94% ”

Golden Triad award,

Thumbs up!

-Computer Game
Review.



BULLFROG
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What's next?

“ ...the original was easily
one of 1994's best, ”

**this sequel
promises to be
even better**

-Computer Player.

“ Editor's
choice award, ”

**...yet another
masterwork
from the wizards
at Bullfrog...
-PC Gamer.**

“ ”

**4½ out of
5 stars.
-CGW**

**“Sorry. I didn't
prepare a speech.”**



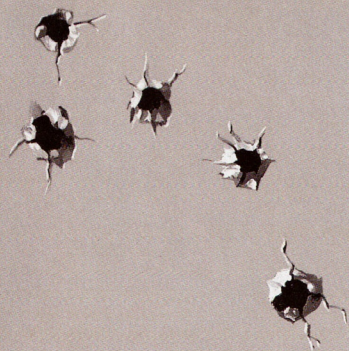
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PC - CD

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What's next?

***"Don't worry about
getting fired,
worry about getting
fired at."***



COMING SOON
**SYNDICATE™
WARS**

CORPORATE WARFARE
P C - C D
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4x4+ anarchy = canyon shredding kill fest.

It's 26 levels of car-to-car combat. Customize buffed monster-stompers with trick engines and air-grabbing jump jets.



Hate cheesy acting? Watch two trash-talkin' jerks rip on the gratuitous video.

With our unique, head-to-head 2 player game, grind a pal's ego into the asphalt. It's cruel. But there ain't no 2nd place.



Get a load of **Off-world Interceptor Extreme™**,

the chaotic death-capade featuring wicked 4x4s and a blood-thirsty arsenal.

Red-line across the galaxy's most intense,

32-bit texture-mapped terrain,

switching on the fly between **cockpit**

and chase view. Careful, though. Grabbing

massive air could

crush a kidney. Or two.



CRYSTAL DYNAMICS



Available on the Sega Saturn™ and PlayStation™ game console.

This official seal is your assurance that this product meets the highest quality standards of SEGA™. Buy games and accessories with this seal to be sure that they are compatible with the Sega Saturn™ System.



Next generation games previewed

Even though the first look at Ultra 64 games grabbed headlines this month, you'll also see some hot new upcoming games for the PC (and Win 95), Saturn, and arcade.

86 Shell Shock **SATURN, PC, PS-X**

Core takes the *Thunderstrike 2* engine and anchors it with this tank shooter

88 Destiny **WINDOWS 95**

IM takes another step forward with this high-tech answer to *Civilization*

91 Theme Hospital **PC**

Bullfrog's latest sim shows off that AI may be smarter than you...

92 Shrinking Character **MULTI**

Cyberdreams brings a '50s B-movie plot to the graphic adventure genre

96 Samarai Spirits **NEO-Geo CD**

Surprise! Neo-Geo departs from the 2D fighter formula with a new RPG

98 Zombieville **PC**

Shock horror meets action adventure that is straight off of B-movie screens

103 Spycraft **WINDOWS 95, MAC**

Watch your friends for fun and profit as an ex-CIA director teaches you how to spy

107 Amok **SATURN**

Saturn flexes its graphic muscles in this new underwater adventure

108 Sky Target **ARCADE**

Sega's gorgeous new revision of *Afterburner* follows the old formula

113 Syndicate Wars **PS-X**

PlayStation gets its first look at Bullfrog's dangerous vision of the future world

117 Scorchier **SATURN**

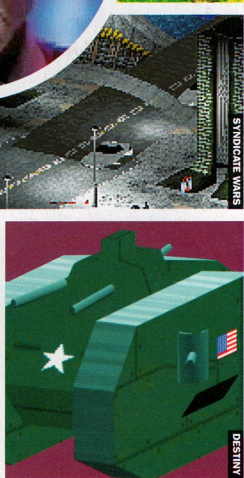
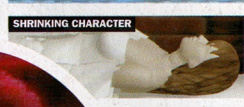
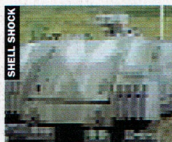
Phenomenal 3D graphics take Saturn to a new level; but can gameplay keep up?

120 Secret of Mana 2 **SNES**

A return to Super NES role-playing at its best. But is anyone still willing to play?

122 SF Alpha **SATURN, PS-X**

A new start for an old title. Is this the last battle of the World Warriors?



ng alphas

Shellshock

Format: **PlayStation
Saturn
Windows 95**

Publisher: **US Gold**

Developer: **Core Design**

Release Date: **March**

Origin: **UK**



Shellshock features two things rarely seen in a game: An African-American cast and interesting cut-scenes

Core's *Thunderstrike* — a 3D helicopter shooter hinting at what the system might have been — was easily the best game ever released for the Sega CD. US Gold, which acquired Core in 1994, recently released the promising *Thunderstrike 2* for Saturn and PlayStation (previewed under the working title *Thunderhawk 2* in NG 9). Core has used the same engine for *Shellshock*, its new first-person tank shooter. Just think of it as *Thunderstrike* on treads.

Set against a gritty near-future backdrop in a world ruled by corrupt

US Gold takes the high road to the next generation with an impressive new first-person tank-combat shooter

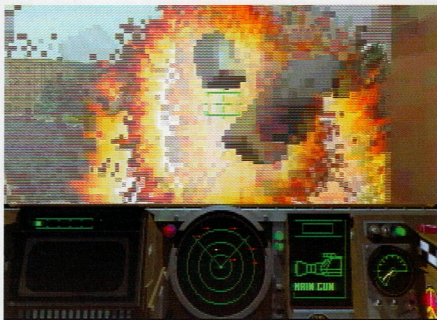


Mano-a-mano against a hulking enemy on a bridge — it's just a typical *Shellshock* encounter. Unfortunately, these screen-shots neither capture the impressive animation of the game, nor the game's fear-inducing feel

tyrants, you play a rookie member of "Da Wardenz," a shadowy group of urban commandos dedicated to fighting fire with fire — taking on injustices, righting wrongs, and generally killing as many enemies as possible. Da Wardenz weapon of choice? Well, of course, it's the M-13 Predator Battletank.

The game features an exclusive first-person perspective across texture-mapped 3D terrain. Unlike some next generation shooters (which have been criticized for being too short), *Shellshock* features 25 different levels set in trouble spots around the globe. The gameplay is relatively simple — you have a radar scope, a health meter, a communications panel for talking to other team members, and a weapons control panel. The game is one-player only on the console systems, while the PC version features either cooperative or competitive networked gameplay. Also available for the PC version is the "no-holds-barred" feature which

Levels are extremely detailed, but more importantly, they're also extremely diverse



The ability to destroy anything a real tank could adds to the realism of the game. And nothing beats a really good explosion (above)

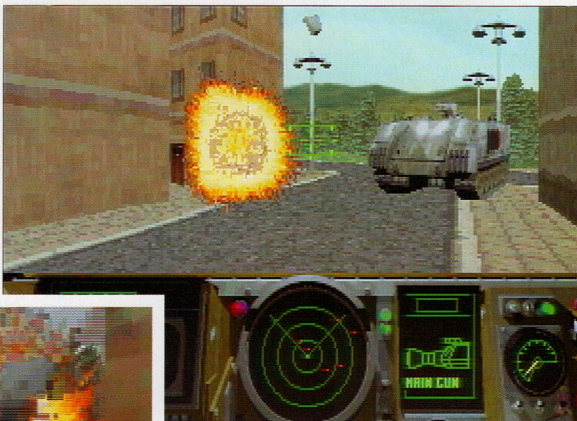
It's a Rap

One of the things that adds to the gritty urban nature of *ShellShock* is the hard-hitting hip-hop soundtrack. Three of the tracks feature vocals by noted San Francisco rap artist Bar None (better known as San Francisco 49er William Floyd). Floyd recorded the tracks specifically for the game, and each features the hard-hitting beats and stinging lyrics that made him more than a minor celebrity off the field. US Gold is currently considering whether or not to include the tracks on the CD in Redbook audio format which would allow them to be played on an audio CD player.

enables you to join or leave network games in progress, thus making the set-up of network missions far easier.

But what sets *ShellShock* apart from the pack is not the graphics — while good, they are really nothing you wouldn't expect from a 32-bit system — it's the gameplay that gets you. The levels are extremely detailed, but more importantly, they're also extremely *there*. Everything you see you can interact with, that is, you can blow up — from fences to trees, even hostages (although of course you're not supposed to); this is to say nothing of the many tanks, APCs, ammo dumps, and shacks you'll destroy in any given mission. The attention to detail is phenomenal: You can take your tank into the water, but only the shallows — go too deep and you're likely to sink.


Your first few missions will probably be spent blowing up trees and killing soldiers, so initially gameplay may be a little boring. What doesn't get boring, though, is the sense of realism the ability to destroy everything lends to the game. After a firefight in a forest,



The close-knit street combat should be tough. Even in the pre-alpha version, it was intense enough to generate an emotion response

for instance, you may wander through and discover whole corpses of trees reduced to burned-out stumps — extraneous to the mission, sure, but this kind of element adds realism to the game. And it should make this one of the more fun and original titles to ship on PlayStation or Saturn.

There are also a few nongameplaying elements that make *ShellShock* worth noting. First, the excellent soundtrack is performed by none other than San Francisco 49er William "Bar None" Floyd. Also, this is one of the first videogames NEXT Generation has seen featuring an almost exclusively African-American cast, a nice change from the white-bread teams that inhabit most videogames. Finally, the animated sequences are among the best we've seen and add a surprising amount of informational value to the storyline.

US Gold has experienced a somewhat mixed reputation over the past few years, but *ShellShock*, along with *ThunderStrike II*, should go a long way toward improving it. 

The animated sequences are among the best we've seen and add a surprising amount to the storyline

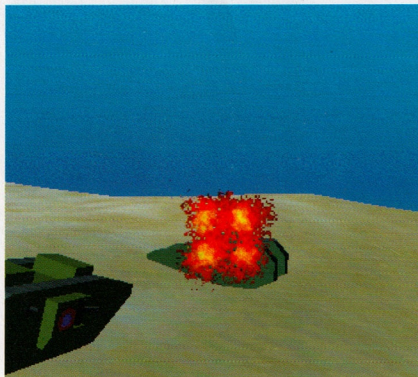


A hostage waits to be rescued in a prisoner-of-war camp. Busting people out of camps with your tank features heavily in some of the levels

ng alphas

Destiny

Format: **Windows 95**
 Publisher: **Interactive Magic**
 Developer: **Interactive Magic**
 Release Date: **spring**
 Origin: **US**



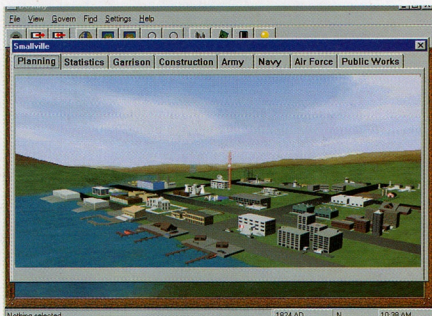
Combat shots are still early but look to be far more detailed than those in *Civilization*. At this point in the game you have discovered major technologies

After *Civilization* took the resource management genre to new heights of popularity, it seemed everyone wanted to get

in on the act. In addition to Microprose's own follow-up titles, such as *Master of Orion*, *Master of Magic*, *Machiavelli: The Prince*, and Sid Meier's own sequel, *Colonization*, several other companies jumped on the bandwagon, producing such unusual titles as *The Patrician*, *New Horizons*, and *High Seas Trader*.

Even so, it seemed that no one (not even Sid) could recapture the same intriguing mix of research, combat, and

A new jaunt through history takes on Sid Meier's *Civilization* legacy and comes up with an unusual but engaging title

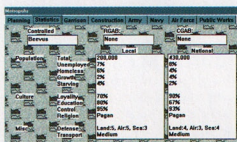


City formation plays a major role in the development of technology. In fact, *Destiny* awards a win to the tribe that can scientifically advance fastest

exploration that made *Civilization* such a hit. Now "Wild" Bill Steely has given his new company, Interactive Magic, the task that's eluded the industry for so long — to create a game that's as addictive and compelling as *Civilization*. The result, a 3D strategy game titled *Destiny*, is the first game in a long time that looks like it may have the strengths to do just that.

In premise, *Destiny* is very similar to *Civilization*. You start as the chieftain of one hunter and gatherer tribe and attempt to become the president of a space age nation. Many

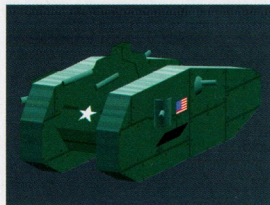
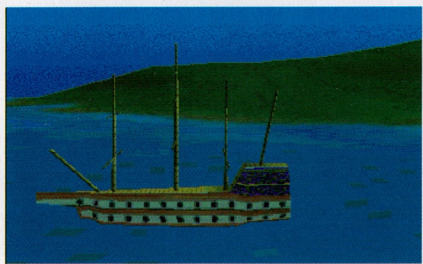
You start as the chieftain of one hunter and gatherer tribe and attempt to become the president of a space age nation



Detailed statistics enable aspiring leaders keep track of their progress. With time-travel like this, stats will be handy



Weaponry looks to be terrifically varied, ranging from rocks and sticks to these tanks. Not bad for a former tribesman



These early (and rather stark) images show advances for weapons on both land and sea

of the research steps are also the same as the classic title, such as the discovery of bronze or iron, which is vital to the continued success of your people. Here though, the two games begin to look and play a great deal different. Unlike *Civilization*, which placed its emphasis on production,

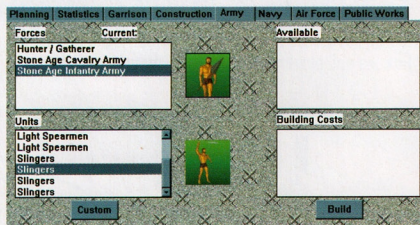
Destiny awards a win to the tribe that can scientifically advance the furthest in a given period of time. Strange social advances, like formalized dancing, play important roles in the continued development of your followers, adding an entirely new strategy for determining which science to invest your time in next. Just because an advance doesn't seem to have any immediate benefit to you doesn't mean that you can live without it in the long run.

Strange social advances, like formalized dancing, play important roles in the continued development of your followers

Other features are to include a realtime three-dimensional interface (a major deviation from *Civilization's* turn-based system), built in network and modem play, artificial intelligence algorithms designed by NEUROMEDIA, an outside AI development studio, and full rules for diplomacy, spying, and goods trading with foreign countries.

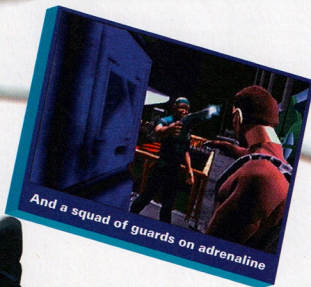
Coming off of such five-star successes as *Apache* and *Capitalism*, Interactive Magic has already shown the PC world that it is a force to be reckoned with. *Destiny* could be the final proof that the upstart newcomers are here to stay.

ng



The *Destiny* interface should not be a surprise to new Windows 95 users, it's intuitive for anyone familiar with previous Windows programs

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Theme Hospital

New AI in Bullfrog's latest sim game may give it an edge

Format: **PC**
 Publisher: **Electronic Arts**
 Developer: **Bullfrog**
 Release Date: **spring**
 Origin: **UK**

There's been a lot of strange settings for strategy games over the years, and the veterans at Bullfrog have been responsible

for most of them. In its latest stretch outside the realms of the usual, the development team has decided to take on the inner workings of a medical building as its arena.

Similar in many ways to its predecessor, *Theme Park*, *Theme Hospital* provides players with the responsibility of building and then running a hospital which is not only effective, but profitable.

To start, players choose between one of four different time periods, the Middle Ages, the Victorian Era, 1970s-1980s, and of course, the future. In the beginning, medicine is as simple as cutting off whatever seems to be ailing the patient, but as time progresses, successful hospitals will need to conduct research to find cures for bigger, more dangerous problems. Although some of the game's medical situations are real, such as broken bones and pregnancy,




"Mornin' doc!" With more than 1,000 characters like this doctor, you can talk and learn information helpful to your cause (top). This is artificial life at its best: watching characters roam around and drop quarters into vending machines is entertaining in its own right (right)



most of them are fictional symptoms designed with humor in mind, like the fashion victim, and of course the horrible, bloated head.

As usual, the bottom line here is money, and the most important goal for continuing play is the creation of an efficient and well-staffed hospital. Specialists can help cure your patients faster and more effectively, but are more expensive to employ, and housemen are inexpensive, but are known to make fatal mistakes. If you run up a massive mortality rate, you'll lose your patients and your business.

While other companies continue to strive for new advances in graphics and full-motion video display, Bullfrog is pulling far ahead in what may be the most important development skill of all, artificial intelligence. 



Theme Hospital is populated with plenty of characters and a very advanced artificial intelligence system

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ng **alphas**

The Shrinking Character

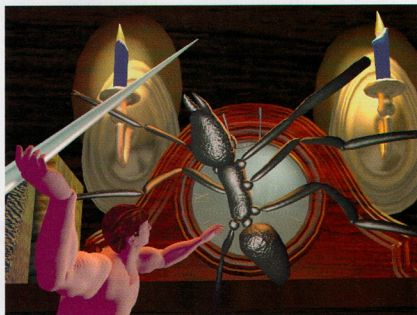
Cyberdreams' latest graphic adventure features a strong storyline, a compelling plot, and extremely linear gameplay

Format: **Win 95, DOS, Saturn, PlayStation**
 Publisher: **Cyberdreams**
 Developer: **Go-Go Interactive**
 Release Date: **fall '96**
 Origin: **US**

Although an experimental antidote does exist, death is the only sure cure for now

In the world of games, a "linear" game can often imply a rigid, boxy, possibly tortuously annoying little rock, and most gamers want to forget this kind of game as soon as possible. But with this new title from Go-Go Interactive, where the step-by-step structure is dictated by the plot, linear may not mean bad.

Set in 1959, the game features a mood — and a plot — not unlike the horror movies of the same era. You play a young private detective hired by a wealthy Washington DC couple to investigate the mysterious disappearance of their daughter, Julie Caldwell. Politically connected (he's the CEO of a huge defense contractor,



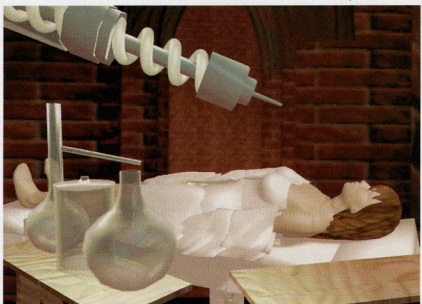
There's no need for fantastic monsters when you're shrinking — a six-foot ant that's 10 times your strength presents a formidable enough challenge

Caldwell Industries), they can't go to the police for fear of press coverage — especially since the prime suspect, Dr. Franklin, is the leading research scientist for Caldwell Industries.

Rumored to be working on an elixir of youth, he hired Julie Caldwell as a research assistant over the objections of her parents. Now she's gone and you, in the guise of an applicant to fill her vacant job, go to a dinner/interview at



Not all gameplay involves running from marauding arachnids. There is also a heavy amount of puzzle solving; in fact, there are about 240 different objectives you'll need to accomplish in 12 hours of gametime, and your one-inch size doesn't help



Rescuing Julie Caldwell from Doctor Franklin's nefarious experiments is your overall goal in the game. Just climbing a table may be a goal in itself



Exploring a laboratory bench takes on a whole new feeling when you're two inches tall and naked. Oodles of well-implemented puzzles will keep you busy

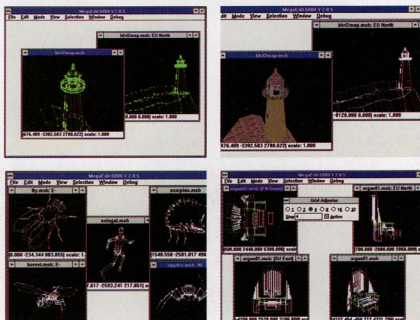
As you may expect, the shrinking motif allows for a wide variety of ingenious puzzles

the eccentric scientist's house. Guess what you just ate? Shrinking potion, included with dinner at no extra charge. To get the job you have to figure out a way to stop shrinking. Although an experimental antidote does exist, death is the only sure cure for now.


The **gameplay** consists of 12 levels, and as you shrink more and more each hour (of gameplay time, not realtime), you race against the clock to find the girl, halt (and hopefully reverse) the shrinking process, and stop the doctor. On each level, there are about 20 puzzles you need to solve and once you change levels, you, quite logically, can't go back — much of the time you're too small to finish a puzzle from the previous level. To avoid the frustrations of earlier Cyberdreams games like *Darkseed*, though, the only thing that advances the clock is solving puzzles.

As you may expect, the shrinking motif allows for a wide variety of ingenious puzzles and Go-Go has included them all, and the plot, too, has many twists and turns. This is Go-Go's first time using its new modular cross-platform 3D game development system and it bodes well for future products.

Overall, this looks like a compelling adventure, with all the atmosphere that Cyberdreams is famous for, coupled with a gameplay model that lessens the frustrations that were most people's complaints with previous Cyberdreams efforts.



Shown here are several of the development screens from Go-Go Interactive which show the development of the three-dimensional models later rendered into gameplay for this atmospheric graphic adventure



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THEY SAY ABSOLUTE BUT HEY, IT'S A HE



These are just three of the animators at Industrial Light & Magic who helped to create the 3D animations for *Jurassic Park*, *Jumanji*, *The Mask*, *Casper*, and more than there's room here to list. (Daniel Jeannette from the rhino, Tom Bertino riding Milo, Geoff Campbell on the raptor.)

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Samurai Spirits RPG

Neo-Geo owners have long been crying out for more than just a staple diet of beat 'em ups. SNK enters the lucrative RPG scene

The Neo-Geo is in desperate need of a title with RPG longevity



Samurai Spirits RPG boasts a whole CD worth of graphics. However, with the Neo-Geo's antiquated single-speed drive, will this equate to galling delays? You bet it will



Two game styles can be adopted: "pure fighting," with 100% control in combat or "traditional RPG," where fights are "semi-active" and statistical probability affects the outcome.

Of the six characters available, most are cameo

roles from the *Samurai Shodown* series. Nonplayer characters can also be chosen to follow the leader, and they can be exchanged throughout the game according to the demands of each particular situation. There are three different game scenarios, each including a different ending and boss character. At the moment, only two of these are known: South America will feature Mijiki and Europe has a boss named Ambrosia.

The Neo-Geo is in desperate need of a title with RPG longevity. However, the machine's archaic single-speed CD drive, combined with the game's size (SNK boasts the machine's RAM will be crammed), could mean there will be a lengthy delay between sections. Prepare for hours spent watching the scintillating loading screen.



Combat is either based around fighters' statistics, or familiar turn-based battles



Of the six characters available, most have appeared in the *Samurai Shodown* beat 'em ups

Format: **Neo-Geo CD**
 Publisher: **SNK**
 Developer: **SNK**
 Release Date: **spring 96**
 Origin: **Japan**

A

lthough the beat 'em up genre, at which the Neo-Geo excels, is popular, the dominant genre in Japan is the

Zelda-style role-playing game, and Neo-Geo owners have waited years for an equivalent title to appear on their machine. Consequently, SNK has reached a compromise: *Samurai Spirits RPG* is an RPG, but it includes characters from the *Samurai Shodown* beat 'em ups.

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**4 OUT OF 5
COMBAT PILOTS SURVEYED
PICKED IT AS THEIR
ATTACK
GUNSHIP
OF CHOICE...**



ng alphas

Zombierville

Format: **PC**
 Publisher: **SCI**
 Developer: **Psygnosis**
 Release Date: **March**
 Origin: **UK**

The dead make their B-movie return as Psygnosis attempts to add new life to its future PC lineup

Now that Sony-owned Psygnosis has shifted its focus from Playstation to PC title development, the company is looking for a handful of titles to add power to its new lineup. Trying to stand out from the vast piles of PC software currently shipping, the recently reformed business is looking at gaming from angles that will appeal to the expanding and increasingly adult PC market.

One of the company's newest titles is a testament to its more mature target audience. *Zombierville*, like *Doom* and *Mortal Kombat* before it, uses violence to create an atmosphere of tension, but adds both a moral agenda and a wicked sense of humor to the mix.

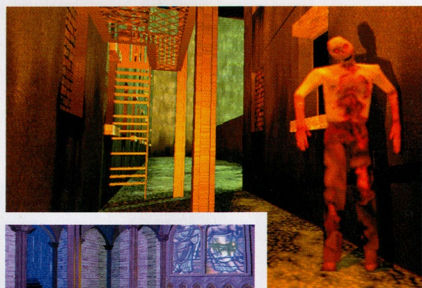
Incorporating several different styles of play, from pure action to hair-tugging puzzle sequences, *Zombierville* has the potential to appeal to audiences who find *Doom*-clones entertaining in the short run, but without the intellectual challenge to stand long-term play.

The basic story is very similar to the B-movies *Night of the Living Dead* or *The Last Man on Earth*. Players move through a game world where a strange disease infects the populace and turns it into man-eating zombies. To complicate things even further, the player has contracted this disease, and must search for an antidote while fending off the savage attacks of a horde of mindless flesh eaters. This is where the game really gets rolling.

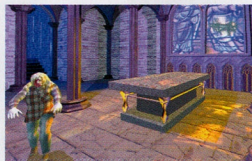
Zombierville's action element is very similar to *Doom*, complete with first-person 3D interface, powerful weapons, and throngs of attacking enemies, but unlike the aging shooter, this title has plenty of innocents running around also. Players can carry on conversations with nonmonster characters, but may find through the course of the game that many of the so-called innocents are



Varying character designs help shape the brooding mood and wonderfully corny feel of this action-strategy title



Yes, *Night of the Living Dead* has now been given a new lease on life, if you will. This used to be the friendly guy next door



The deadly disease seems to affect each character in a different manner (above)

extremely hostile. The player does have the option of killing these antagonists, but runs the risk of accelerating the progress of their disease every time they do so. Game weapons vary from the standard pistol and machine gun to more advanced weapons like the grenade and petrol bomb. The thing to remember here is that no matter how powerful your character's weaponry, intelligence, not force, will get you through the game.

Now that PC players are beginning to tire of the mindless first-person shoot-em-ups, it's games like *Zombierville* — combining the action elements of a *Doom* or a *Heretic* — that have the depth it takes to bring the consumer out of his or her torpor.

Although it's still far too early in the development cycle to tell whether or not this game is a sure-fire hit, it's definitely one that first-person action fans will want to keep on top of.



Backgrounds include the same attention to detail Psygnosis is known for

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US GOLD

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(figure 1)

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(figure 2)

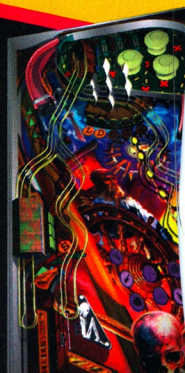
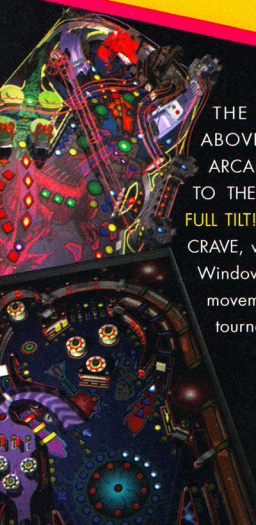
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Spycraft:

The Great Game

Format: **Win 95, Mac**

Publisher: **Activision**

Developer: **Activision**

Release Date: **March**

Origin: **US**

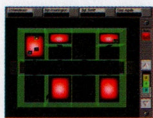
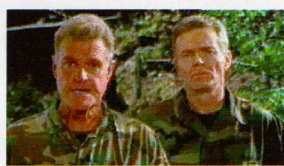
Ok, lets get this out of the way right from the start — this game has more than 120 minutes of video, but it's no full-motion video

game. Almost no puzzles involve video and Activision has taken steps to ensure that this is going to be more than just a run-of-the-mill click-and-watch "interactive movie."

First, Activision recruited the very best in the business to provide background for this Tom Clancy-like spy adventure. Former CIA Director William Colby and former KGB Major-General Oleg Kalugin both consulted on the script and design, and acted in it. Also impressive is that James Adams,



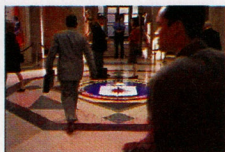
The acting in the FMV sections is surprisingly good. This could be the best interactive techno-thriller yet



The PDA is your main interface for the game (top). Constructing mug shots from photos is a fairly difficult puzzle — there are more than 9 million potential combinations



The CIA headquarters in Langley, VA, was faithfully recreated for the game



author of *New Spies: Intelligence After the Cold War*, wrote the script.

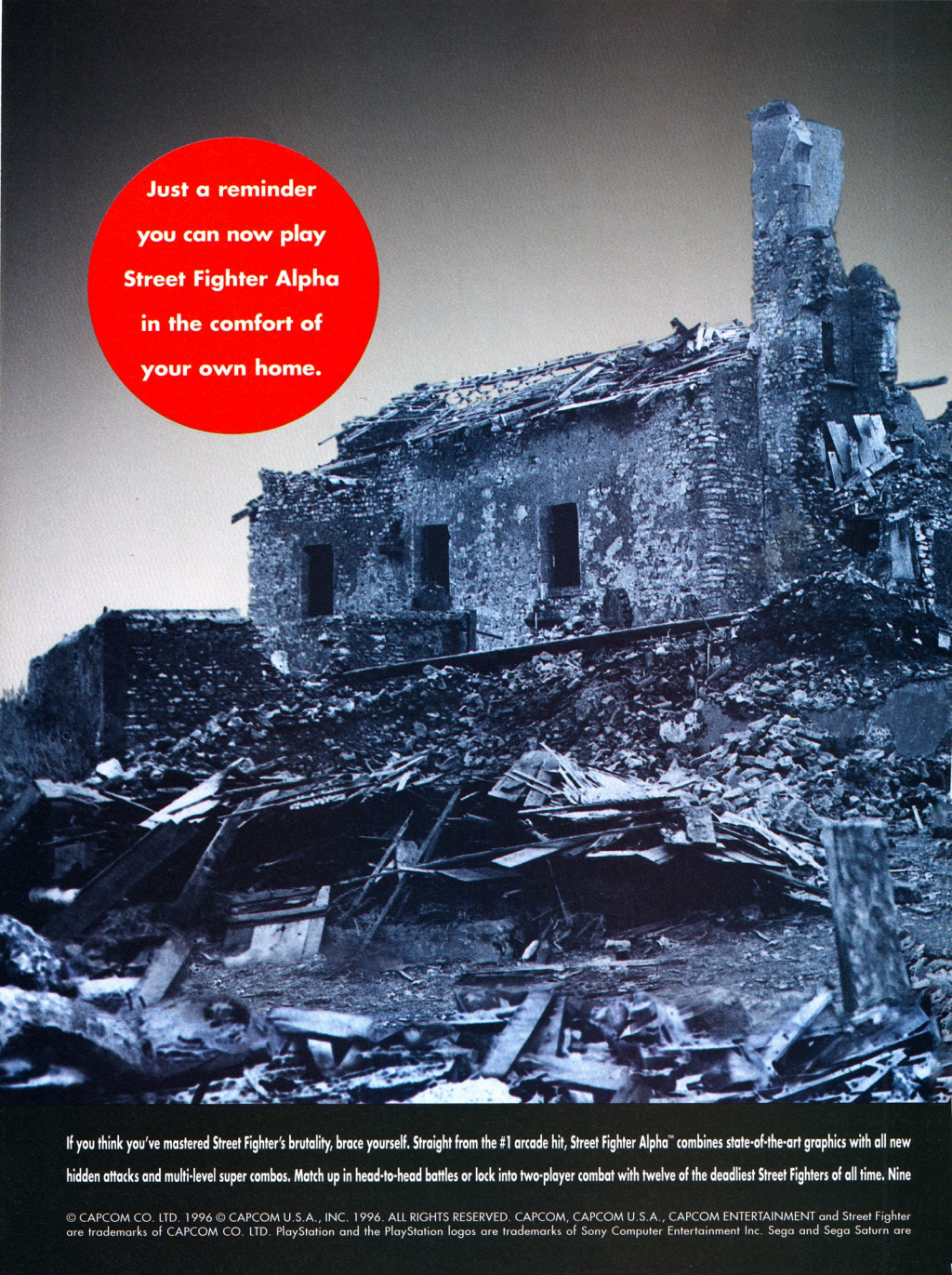
The game is set in a very realistic environment, against the backdrop of the assassination of a Russian presidential candidate. You're CIA, not easy in the best of times, and certainly not in post-cold war Russia where drug trafficking, nuclear terrorism, and ethnic conflicts have replaced the classic spy-vs-spy super-power struggles.

The title will actually have the ability to automatically update data, like news reports or character dossiers, in real time via the World Wide Web; and large parts of the game are written in HTML to facilitate this. There seems no doubt that the concept is timely and exciting, and certainly the credentials of the principals are impeccable.

With all the elements in place, Activision looks like it may have a serious contender on its hands.



William Colby consulted on the game and is also a featured character (above)



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ALPHA





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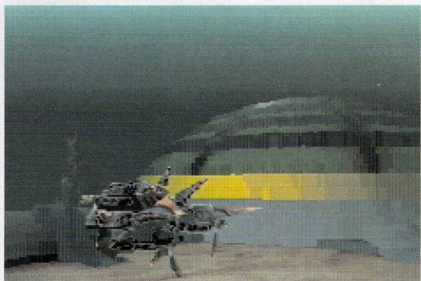
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Amok



Amok's 3D engine produces some of the most stunning, atmospheric graphics yet seen on Saturn. The murky waters provide a sea-like environment and enable convincing clipping and a high frame rate

Format: **Saturn**

Publisher: **Scavenger**

Developer: **Lemon**

Release Date: **TBA**

Origin: **US**

Following Scavenger's reputation for incredible graphic products, it's no surprise that *Amok* is yet another frenzy of the company's visual craftsmanship.

The game involves a series of underwater missions in which the player's submarine has to infiltrate an enemy compound. It's all familiar territory of course, but Amok's phenomenal graphics ensure this is no ordinary blaster; this game looks more like footage from James Cameron's *The Abyss*.

Employing Scavenger's AM3-beating 3D routines, *Amok*

Scavenger cements its reputation for developing stunning 3D games with this new underwater blaster



The enemies in *Amok* fit snugly into the background scenery. Sharks are particularly dangerous when enraged

employs "true 3D" collision detection, detecting hits between objects, surfaces, walls, enemies, and more. The Scavenger team spent an entire exhaustive year developing this technology.

The game does need work, though. The controls, although versatile when searching, seldom enable the sub to escape an onslaught from four or five sharks, and if the vehicle is fired upon with missiles, survival is rare.

But the engine does offer fantastic possibilities. If the coders distanced themselves from hectic blasting and introduced levels involving manic chases through caverns and tunnels, *Amok* may be yet another example of Saturn's shrouded potential.



Amok's phenomenal graphics ensure this is no ordinary blaster; it looks more like footage from James Cameron's *The Abyss*



Amok employs an odd display, especially noticeable during explosions, that stipples the graphics. This quirk does not affect gameplay, though

ng alphas

Sky Target



Lock-on technology enables the player to zero in and blast the many enemies, while gorgeous texture-mapped backgrounds enhance the visuals



Sky Target is surely meant to attract some of the crowd away from Namco's Air Combat 22

The newest line of Sega arcade games, from *Fighting Vipers* and *Rail Chase 2* to *Virtua Striker* have a bright brash look and feel, immediately telling of their maker. And *Sky Target*, one of Sega's newest creations, evolves this somewhat "cool" feeling in its own fashion.

Following the blend of flight sims with flying shooters to an extreme by substituting the slimmest of flying skills with rapid shooting techniques, *Sky Target* is the next step in air combat games for Sega, and is surely meant to attract some of the crowd away from Namco's dogfight-style *Air Combat 22*. *Sky Target*'s sharp polygonal graphics, brightly colored planes, high frame rate, and gorgeous backgrounds stand up to any of Sega's best-looking games.

The concept behind *Sky Target* is simple: lock onto your ariel opponents and shoot them down using guided missiles and machine guns, and stay out of the way of theirs. Unlike its predecessor, *Afterburner*, the developers have done away with the acceleration

Fast-paced arcade-style shooting and brilliant graphics may only be padding for what underneath is really just a super-looking *Afterburner* remake

Format: **Arcade**
Publisher: **Sega**
Developer: **Sega**
Release Date: **March**
Origin: **Japan**

throttle, leaving you with maneuvering and shooting only, which isn't necessarily a negative, considering the multitude of enemies that fill the sky like fireworks. Like *Afterburner*, this title isn't a fully directional 3D game, and permits forward movement only. Also choosable are two paths at the end of level 2, culminating in the same level.

You choose one of four different planes: the F-14D, F-15S/MTD, F-16C, or the Rafale M, each carrying equal and unlimited weaponry, so you can shoot to your heart's desire. Each of your six missions follows the standard formula including a barrage of enemies you hit for points and accuracy percentages, which increase your points. Following the onslaught of enemies you'll encounter titanic-sized bosses.

Though one-on-one dogfights are lacking, replaced or rather never intended as the actual challenge, *Sky Target*, with its big-screen gameplay, challenging throngs of enemies, gorgeous scenery, and ominous end-bosses, should give flying and shooting gamers something to look forward to this spring.



One of the levels sees the player fly through clusters of clouds before encountering his or her enemies (top). An end-level boss puts the player through a cascade of heat-seeking missiles (above)



Gamers with good hand-eye coordination and fast reflexes will enjoy *Sky Target* as the skies fill with flying projectiles and oncoming enemies



{ Talk }



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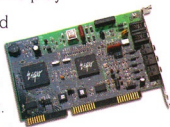
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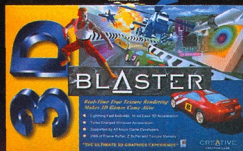
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Syndicate Wars



These post-apocalyptic landscapes look even more grim when viewed from up close. Improved graphics and increased AI set this game apart

**Where
Syndicate
Wars really
stands apart
from the
original
is in its
phenomenal
visuals and
artificial
intelligence**

The original *Syndicate* was one of the most innovative and entertaining titles ever released for the PC, and it has since been converted for several of the console systems as well. Now, several years later, the Bullfrog veterans have decided to create a sequel, this time using the graphic power of PlayStation to enhance a game that looks to be as addictive as its predecessor.

As in the first game, you are in charge of a massive corporate syndicate that's trying to take over the world by eliminating its competition's key employees (no different than, say, the mafia). Your only tools in this battle are cybernetically controlled agents and the ultra-tech weaponry with which you arm them. Your missions can range from simple assassinations to the more



Unlike the flat worlds of *Syndicate*, *Syndicate Wars*' polygon landscapes are full of 3D terrain effects. This title is more than just a facelift

A sequel to one of the best strategy games of all time (and still being ported) heads for PlayStation

Format:	PlayStation
Publisher:	EA
Developer:	Bullfrog
Release Date:	spring
Origin:	UK



The gloomy, Big-Brother mood has once again been captured nicely by Bullfrog. This title also promises to feature head-to-head PlayStation play

complex (read: dangerous) object recovery sorties.

Where *Syndicate Wars* really stands apart from the original *Syndicate* is in its phenomenal visuals and artificial intelligence. The game will feature a beautiful new world with characters far more identifiable than in the original title and true light sourcing for all of the objects in the vector-mapped cities. The game will also contain fantastic new rotating battlefields that will add an entirely new element to combat play.

Along with a promise of support for PlayStation's Direct Link, Bullfrog has added a surprisingly intelligent computer populous to ensure fresh long-term play.





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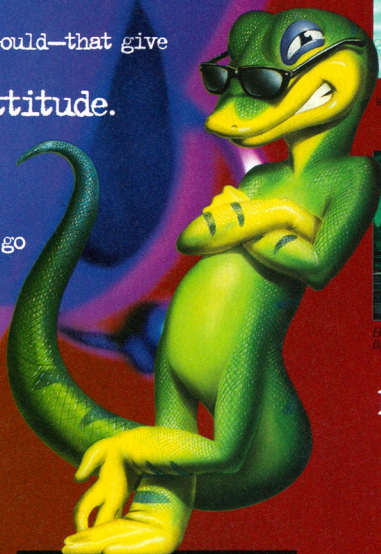
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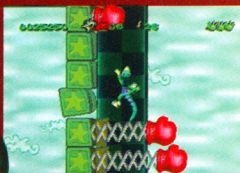
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Scorcher



The casual stills shown here may depict a game of subtle graphic beauty, but they still fail to do justice to the wonderful job the Zyrinx team has done when making the tracks and graphics

Scavenger's attempt to shatter the three dimensional racing game cliché twists the formula — quite literally — into a manic chase along tunnels and down spiraling pipes...

Format: **Saturn**
 Publisher: **Scavenger**
 Developer: **Zyrinx**
 Release date: **TBA**
 Origin: **US**

Scavenger's first entry into the racing game genre deviates from the standard format in a number of ways. Most importantly, the player

rides around a network of valleys interspersed with tubes, bridges, obstacles, and deadly pits. The skill of the game lies in avoiding these hazards rather than negotiating tricky corners.

In essence, therefore, this early *Scorcher* demo has little more gameplay than the bonus level in *Sonic 2*, where Sonic and Tails raced each other down a tube, avoiding mines and collecting rings. However, what gives *Scorcher* credit is its astonishing 3D graphics.



On level two the bikes have to race past stationary trucks. The misty sky also scrolls past in translucent parallax



Scorcher accommodates two play modes, outside (right) and an in-car view (top). This second perspective immerses the player right in the game, although what you're doing becomes confusing



Boasting light-sourced shading, depth fading, and simulated ray tracing, the 3D engine is so impressive Sega is even shipping a demo to developers to convince them of Saturn's power.

By far the most impressive feature is the use of depth fading to cleverly camouflage any distance clipping. Sections of road and piping appear silhouetted against the apocalyptic skyline, slowly fading into view as they become more integral to the display. And all of this runs at a very smooth 30 frames per second.

But graphics are only half a game, and *Scorcher* needs a lot more work to bring the gameplay on a par with the visuals. Because of the plunging tunnels encountered throughout the course, the vehicle is often sucked along with the player having only minimal control. Also, the obstacles require precision timing to avoid them, and racing around the track can therefore prove frustrating.

With a little more work on the actual gameplay, *Scorcher* could evolve into a phenomenal first entry for Saturn newcomers, Scavenger. If not, the title will just remain a magnificent demonstration of Saturn's graphic capabilities.

ng

The 3D is so impressive that Sega is even shipping a demo to third party developers to convince them of Saturn's power

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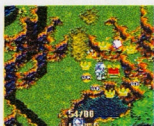
ng alphas

Secret of Mana 2

For many, *Secret of Mana* was the RPG equivalent of *Lord of the Rings*. Can *Mana 2* improve on one of the Super NES' greatest hits?



Whereas the rest of the industry seems only interested in rendered 3D work, SquareSoft's continued support of traditional 2D artwork bears fruit in *Secret of Mana's* sumptuous scenery. These beautiful backgrounds are in some ways a tribute to the graphic skills of yesteryear's artists, when state-of-the-art Silicon Graphics machines were unheard of



Secret of Mana 2 retains the famous *Mana* ring menu system. A treasure chest will reveal a roulette ring as its prize

Format: **Super NES**
 Publisher: **SquareSoft**
 Developer: **SquareSoft**
 Release Date: **spring**
 Origin: **Japan**

The original *Secret of Mana* has so far sold more than half a million copies in the US alone. In the process it gave the role-playing genre a much-needed kick start, elevating it into the fastest growing game-style in the West; it also made it the subject of one of the most vocal newsgroups on the Internet and paved the way for more traditional RPGs like *Final Fantasy*.

When you look back over previous Square games and its amazing graphic advances, it's hard to imagine how its artists could have squeezed anything more from the humble Super NES, but *Seiken Densetsu 3* (the Japanese title

for the game) manages to push that boundary just a little bit further. There's no use of Silicon Graphics wizardry, but the riot of color and detail still puts just about every other recent 32-bit RPG to shame. A conscious decision by Square to avoid using harsh blacks for outlines pays off handsomely. Music, too, stretches the Super NES to its limits. Although many of the tunes and instruments remain the same, lending a nice feel of continuity for fans, the game's composer, Hiroki Kikuta, has



The "neo-motion battle" that Square is so proud of can sometimes seem to be just a free-for-all as the computer-controlled characters lash out at anything within striking distance. *Virtua Fighter* it is not



Making your way around the huge *Mana* world is made easier by frequent save point statues and handy methods of transport like the sailing ship. This time around there are two maps by which your characters can navigate



Instead...

While fans argue among themselves about not getting every Japanese game translated, the US arm of SquareSoft is trying to smooth the troubled waters by giving the West its own version of the magic Square formula in *Secret Of Evermore*. Taking what is essentially the game engine from *Secret Of Mana* it's crafted a tale based around old B-movies, a boy, his dog, and a professor trapped in his own virtual world.

Although maybe concentrating a little too much on maze and puzzle solving and lacking the finer points of Japanese design and character sensibilities, *Evermore* is still a decent beginning that bodes well for Western audiences.

pushed for a hi-fi quality soundtrack with crystal-clear pianos and a deep bass that just begs to be routed through a proper system.

But while eye

and ear candy may be all very well, there were some definite flaws in *Seiken 2* (aka the original *Mana*) that needed to be addressed in the sequel. The simultaneous three-player environment may have been revolutionary but in practice it proved decidedly annoying. This sort of game doesn't really lend itself to a multiplayer mode. Even worse, in one-player mode the computer-controlled characters constantly slowed the game to a crawl, especially when they ran up against bits of scenery and were promptly stymied.

Thankfully, *Seiken 3* gets around that problem by the simple expedient of making the player's character able to move freely no matter where the others are. Should anyone be lost off-screen, standing still for a few seconds makes them join the party again. Unfortunately there is no such improvement in another of *Mana*'s old bugbears — the combat system. While Square claim its new "neo-motion battle" system represents a huge advance in fight mechanics, little



Of the major elements that have dramatically improved in *Secret of Mana 2* are the huge bosses. The first one you encounter, a giant crab, jumps effortlessly around the screen and is superbly animated

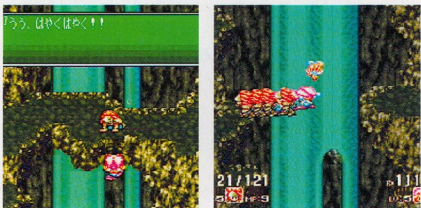
seems to have changed. The computer-controlled characters don't display any real tactics in combat, just a greater resilience to damage. Their inability to respond to depleted hit-points by healing themselves means that, as in the original, it's all too easy to end a battle only to find all the computer-controlled characters slaughtered.

These "problems"

have recently been the cause of what has become a minor war between Western *Mana* fans and SquareSoft USA. Because of so-called programming faults that Square considers impossible to fix during the process, *Secret Of Mana 2* has effectively had its US release canceled. This has angered many more fanatical fans who blindly see it more as a case of sour grapes by SquareSoft USA because its own project, *Secret Of Evermore*, wasn't as well received as it had hoped.

Programming bugs or no, overall, this is yet another gem in Square's ever increasing portfolio of hits. **NEXT Generation's** only real concern is over the game's subject matter itself. Just how long can the company keep the magic-and-monsters fantasy-formula fresh? True, *Seiken Densetsu 3* boasts multiple storylines, not to mention huge baddy bosses in the best arcade tradition, but it's still a bit to see these developments married to a different scenario once in a while.

If SquareSoft converted the famed RPG *Shadowrun* — now that would be cause for celebration.

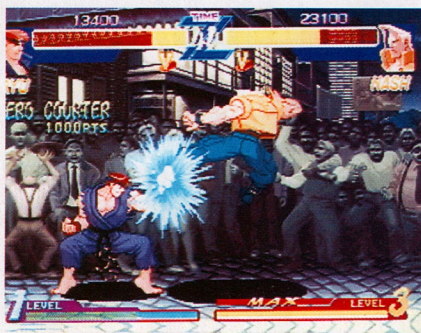


Harking back to the previous game, one of the heroes rescues *Mana 2*'s equivalent of the sprite child from a perilous drop. A bit later in the game your *Mana Spirit* helps your character cross an otherwise impassable gap

ng alphas

Street Fighter Alpha

The original fighting game, now updated with liquid-smooth animation and speed, goes back to its roots for a revival



Street Fighter Alpha adopts the graphic style of an anime comic book, and yet Capcom has chosen to keep the gameplay strictly two dimensional



Two D or not 2D? That question may have weighed heavily on the minds of Capcom designers preparing to unleash another *Street Fighter* sequel into a not entirely unsuspecting world. Despite the spectacular emergence of 3D into the beat-em-up domain, the success of Neo-Geo titles such as *King of Fighters* and *Art of Fighting* has proved the traditional 2D approach still has an amazingly strong grip on the market. And thus, *Street Fighter Alpha*

Format: **Saturn & PlayStation**

Publisher: **Capcom**

Developer: **Capcom**

Release Date: **TBA**

Origin: **Japan**

remains resolute to its 2D predecessor. In the *SF* universe, this game is a prequel to *SFII*, employing fighters from the original (Adon and Birdie) as well as Guy and Sodom from *Final Fight*. From the first *SFII*, only Ryu, Ken, Chun Li, and Sagat remain. There are also two newcomers: Charlie (Guile's look-and-move-alike and partner) and Rose (a kind of Kung Fu bum).

SF Alpha shows a radical departure from the old pseudo-realistic design, and moves toward the style of *Dark Stalkers*. Characters are cartoony and exaggerated in physical dimensions.

Gameplay advances have also been made. The special move graphics have been updated and the power meter from *Super SF II* now has three levels.

It will be interesting to see how *Street Fighter Alpha* fares against the likes of *Soul Edge* and *Virtua Fighter 2*. The arcade version has failed to pose a threat to newer three-dimensional fighting coin-ops such as *Tekken 2*. However, if the conversion is well implemented, it will definitely sit next to *Resident Evil* in the box marked "Capcom revival."

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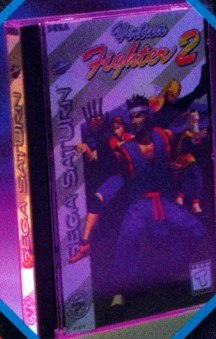
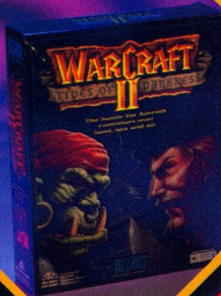
SF Alpha shuns realistic fighting moves seen in *VF2*, for example, for fantastic blows (above)



Special move fans won't be disappointed by *Street Fighter Alpha*'s range of attacks and combos. But can a game that uses traditional 2D bitmaps really compete against the versatility that 3D provides?

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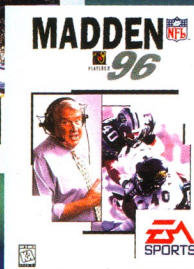
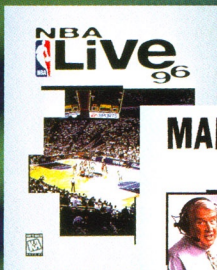
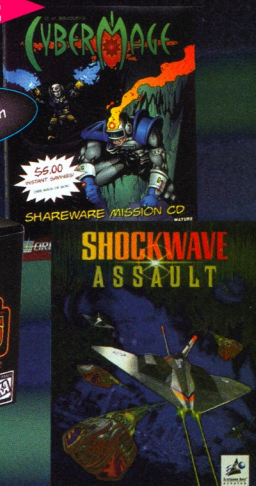
◆ VIRTUA FIGHTER 2

◆ DESTRUCTION DERBY

CD-ROM Entertainment

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Shareware
disk! Full version
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Origin

Cybermage: Shareware Mission CD
Step off the pages of a cyberpunk comic book and into a fantastic 3D world created of a 21st-century superhero entrusted with the unearthly darklight gem. This is a stand-alone scenario and won't spoil the plot of the full version game. Includes \$5.00 instant savings check good toward the purchase of Cybermage: Darklight Awakening and a mini Cybermage comic book.

PC CD-ROM

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Desktop Toys

Desktop Toys

An all-new way to have fun with your computer! Once you install these interactive toys and start them up, they're present in any Windows application, ready to enjoy at the click of a button. Offers fun of all types, from blasting away at your documents to launching orbiting rubber balls to bouncing a wacky array of items on your screen.

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Electronic Arts

Shockwave Assault

Defeat a vast armada of exotic alien warships as they unleash a deadly assault on Earth. The intense, high-speed action in 3D terrain takes full advantage of Windows 95's advanced features. Improved Cockpit and Interface graphics let you get right to the action. AutoPlay lets you play when CD is inserted. No installing required.

Windows 95 CD-ROM

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Electronic Arts

NBA Live 96

The most realistic NBA hoops game you can buy! Delivers real NBA 5-on-5 hoops strategies in an intense, action-packed atmosphere with awesome 3D court and multiple camera angles. All 29 NBA teams (including expansion franchises Toronto and Vancouver), 2 All-Star and 4 custom teams are included.

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Electronic Arts

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The undisputed champion of multimedia football is back and better than ever. With motion captured animations of real NFL players, Madden University football tutorial, precision gameplay and over 100 NFL teams.

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Electronic Arts

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Over 3,000 real world-class players from 12 International Leagues combined with stunning graphics, specially created sound, professionally designed computer intelligence, the premier license, and multiple modes of play. Unlimited camera angles bring the 3D-rendered stadiums to life offering a completely interactive Quest for the Cup.

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Your character is a synthetic 3-dimensional actor, interacting with other synthetic 3D actors as you investigate your own adventures. Trying to discover who and what you are. With this package, you'll also get the expansion disk, a continuation of the adventure, plus features improvements on the original adventure's format.

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An unprecedented compilation of the best in gaming software. Contains 1 Motion's Alone in the Dark, one of the best-selling interactive mysteries of all time; Electronic Arts' Origin's Wing Commander, the original space flight simulator that started it all; Sony Interactive's The Lemmings Chronicles, a new adventure that lets you lead three Lemming Tribes; Access' Links, taking you to the Torrey Pines Golf Course; Star Press' Sports Illustrated Multimedia Almanac, 1995 Edition with the year's most exciting sports action; and Great Bear's GemStorm, a Tetris-style sleeper everyone will enjoy!

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Formgen
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Travel from a moon station to a space station then finally to L.A., all in pursuit of attacking aliens. Taunt your opponents with RemoteRidicule™ while you move freely above and below ground, water or space.

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Formgen
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Prepare for brain-searing, spine-jarring, retina-bursting, adrenaline-pumping realism. Cockpit data displays simulate actual F/A-18 weapons systems for tactical decision making. Use the flight recorder's virtual camera and VCR controls to replay the action. You get a full array of weapons systems, including today's most advanced TV-guided missiles and smart bombs (as seen in Desert Storm).

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Formgen
Extreme: Rise of the Triad

The most dangerous, death dealing game of 1995 is now the most challenging game of 1996. Features deviously different tricks, traps, and treachery never before seen in Triad, phenomenal fire-fights against the toughest Triads and meanest monks, and some of the most sadistic, brain-bending puzzles yet. Fight your friends in the first 12 levels that are head to head ready!

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Take control of the 12 original street fighters with new looks and special techniques. Advance to the finals and devastate your enemy into submission to earn the title of Grand Champion.

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As captain of a ballistic missile submarine engaged in a life-and-death struggle, you must save not only your ship but also reveal a sinister plot that could trigger a global confrontation.

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Journey through man-made pocket universes full of cyborgs, pirates and witches who provide deadly puzzles. Embark on an odyssey to worlds where magic reigns, reality warps and plants speak words of wisdom. Watch as "bottled time" affects people and objects in universes obeying different laws of physics.

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Duke Nukem 3D

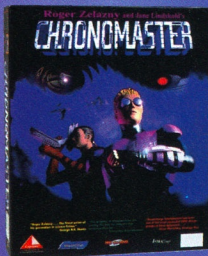
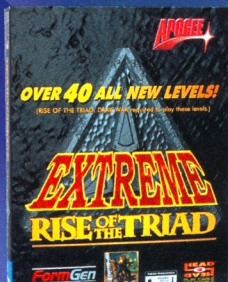


Coming soon!

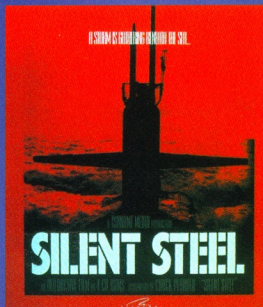


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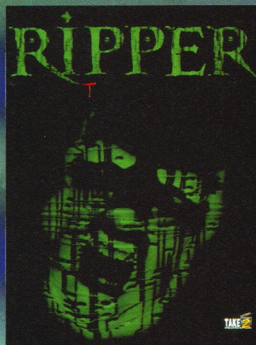
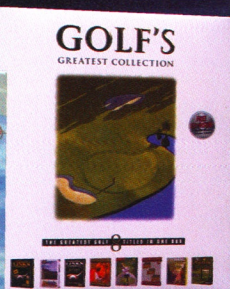
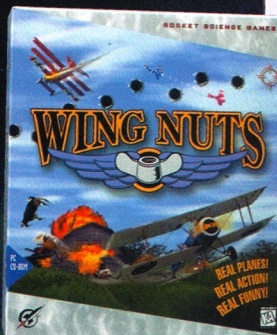
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**Rocket Science
Wing Nuts**

Offers all the dogfights you love, without the frustration of flight simulation you hate. Drop into the cockpit and you're instantly off into the action. Your strategy counts as much as your aim. Stunning flight sequences and goofy power-ups.

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Rocket Science

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You are in charge of a mega ship that's part battleship, part carrier, and all muscle. With a highly trained crew, on board fighter crafts, shuttles, terrain vehicles, a complement of space marines, an awesome array of firepower and orders to destroy anything that's deemed hostile.

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Take 2

Ripper

Jack's back. In 2060, a vicious serial killer stalks the mean streets of New York. The murderer's trail leads from the nether-regions of cyberspace, through police HQ, to the comatose mind of the Ripper's latest victim. Star-studded Hollywood cast including Christopher Walken, Ossie Davis, Burgess Meredith and Jimmie Walker.

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The intergalactic game of combat and strategy. It's one life or death mission after another. Fast action, powerful explosions and outstanding 3-D graphics as you try to uphold law and order in your sector.

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Interactive Magic

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The first helicopter simulation game to use new 3-D visual technology optimized to provide unprecedented detail at low altitude. Features realistic flight simulation of the U.S. Army AH-64 Apache Longbow Helicopter. Accessible to all levels of player: from quick start free-for-all to sophisticated, real-world missions.

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Take a walk with the Lemmings as they romp their way through 90 brand new adventures! Increasingly difficult puzzles give you the experience to conquer even the most intricate levels in the game. Bigger, better, more frantic fun for the whole family.

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ESPN National Hockey Night**

Hit the ice and experience explosive hockey action from the first face-off with blistering slap shots and hard-hitting checks. Choose from all 26 NHL teams and the full 1996 NHLPA roster. Then tailor your lines for power plays, scoring or checking. Full motion NHL video clips, CD-quality audio and ESPN scouting reports.

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**Sony
ESPN NBA Airborne '95**

Take it to the hoop with the ultimate in 2-on-2 full-court action. Awesome fast-breaking gameplay combined with detailed player stats. The action takes place against a backdrop of ultra-realism, including crowd noises, ref's whistles, even sneaker squeaks and rebound sounds. Choose from 81 of the hottest players in the NBA from all 27 teams.

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Join Simon on a fantastic, humorous adventure after being tricked by the evil wizard Sordid and transported to other worlds in a magical wardrobe. Then, help Simon find enough fuel to return home safely.

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**IBM Multimedia
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You're the doctor...when the gurney hits the doors. It's all up to you. Move rapidly between patients, checking for symptoms and examining wounds. You'll operate in a 3D, photorealistic hospital setting. Work your way up to chief of staff, if you can!

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**IBM Multimedia
Quest for Fame**

Take a wild ride from obscurity to a stadium performance with Aerosmith or hit rock bottom to the dreaded Polyester Lounge. The amazing "V-Pick" puts you at center stage or use the virtual guitar. Eight hit songs.

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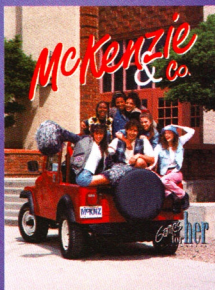
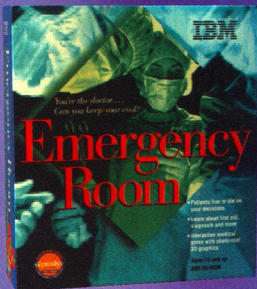
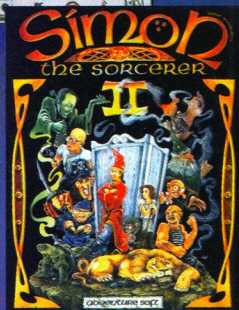
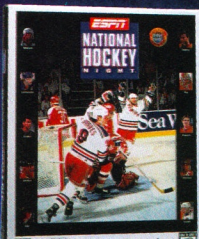
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**American Laser Games
McKenzie & Co.**

An action packed CD adventure girls will love! Zoom through a fun filled junior year at Madison High in an interactive motion picture game that delivers endless hours of entertainment. Meet cool and funny friends, design your own wardrobe, do a makeover with Kim or Carly...and more!

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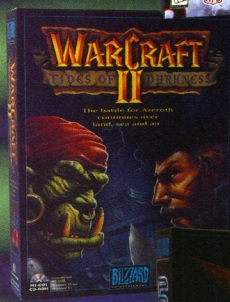
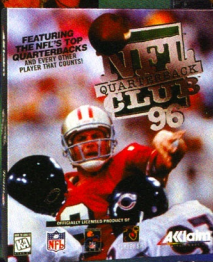
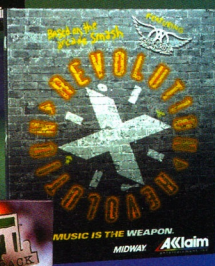
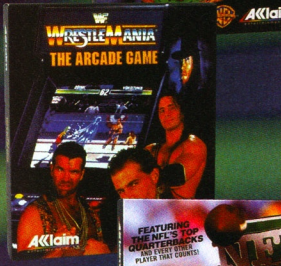
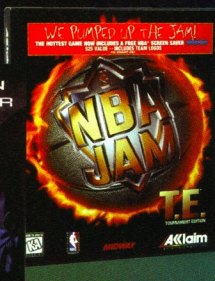
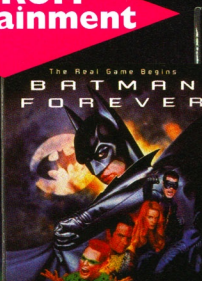
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Acclaim

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The movie event of 1995 translates into the hottest game of the year! Battle as Batman or Robin with incredible weapons, moves and attacks! Hidden surprises, head-to-head fighting option and computer rendered graphics.

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Acclaim

NBA Jam Tournament Edition

The best arcade translation yet, with faster gameplay and incredible graphics! More super slam dunkin', in your face moves than ever and over 100 NBA superstars, exclusive NBA full motion video, thunderous new jams, arcade player scaling and more!

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Acclaim

WWF Wrestlemania: The Arcade Game

Take a ringside seat, WWF fans! Incredibly realistic graphics, more true-to-life, mat-thumping wrestling moves and awesome special moves! Play-by-play with Vince McMahon, Jerry 'The King' Lawler and Howard Finkel plus wrestler taunts.

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Revolution X

Free Aerosmith band members from kidnappers determined to stop the world's youth from having fun. Soundtrack features chart-topping Aerosmith songs.

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Feature by feature, the most authentic football game ever! Features real NFL players motion captured for the most realistic football action ever plus full motion video of Quarterback Club members offering advice, tips and complements. 3D rendered stadiums and ultra-smooth cam replay to review plays from any angle.

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Blizzard

WarCraft II: Tides of Darkness

A real-time, fantasy strategy game. Return to the world of Warcraft, where the battle between the evil Orcs and the noble Humans rages on. Enhanced artificial intelligence provides incredible challenge by learning, adapting, and responding to your actions.

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Enter the world of Warcraft, a mystical land where evil Orcs and noble Humans battle for survival and domination. Two dozen campaign scenarios within 2 separate story lines plus more than 20 additional scenarios. Command many unique creatures, including demons, elementals, necromancers, archers, and spearmen.

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Blizzard

Pax Imperia 2

Control every aspect of a civilization on the verge of entering the vast frontier of space. Economics, research, espionage, exploration and diplomacy are the tools you'll use to create and maintain your galactic empire. Command any of the known species or define and create your own unique race.

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Virgin Interactive

11th Hour

When journalist Robin Morales vanishes while investigating the rotting, abandoned mansion of legendary toy maker Henry Stauf, events resurrect a malignant past. A wide array of games, puzzles and quests cleverly underscores the time-bending, contemporary adult mystery. Only the deepest horrors of the mind could spread such terror in the night.

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Virgin Interactive

Screamer

Get a grip. You're sliding into a turn at 200 miles per hour and centrifugal force will only carry you so far. Find out how your PC really handles 'cause you've never been allowed to go this fast before. Six punishing tracks and 12 precision automobiles (6 automatic and 6 manual).

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Virgin Interactive

Zone Raiders

This game is about offensive driving. If someone gets in your way, take him out with a burst of machine gun fire. If that doesn't work, a sidewinder missile could be more persuasive. You're in the future now. And sane driving is a thing of the past.

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Virgin Interactive

The Legend of Kyrandia: The Series

Experience the magic of this 3-book series packed with brilliantly rendered animation, humor and puzzles. Travel deeper and further into an adventure world that will tantalize and twist even the sharpest minds. It's a land of magic where the trick is to stay alive.

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GT Interactive Software

Locus

It's about speed. It's about action on the floor. Action on the walls...on the ceiling...Non-stop VR action everywhere you turn. Move. Crush. Score. Up to 9 players.

Windows 95/DOS CD-ROM

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GT Interaction Software

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Challenge your mind as well as your trigger finger. Embark on a journey into a dazzling world of dreamlike suspension. Desolate. Frozen. Explore the complex web of mazes while battling alien life forms. Features interactive flight over a huge virtual asteroid.

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GT Interactive Software

Island Casino

Check in to the El San Juan Hotel and Casino and hit the tables for 25 of the world's most popular casino games! Or learn to play with step-by-step, easy-to-understand instruction. Or just live it up. Tour the grounds, check out the island or just dial room service and order whatever catches your fancy!

PC CD-ROM

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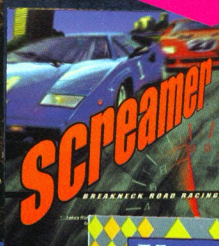
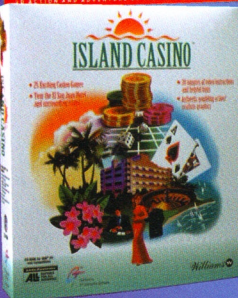
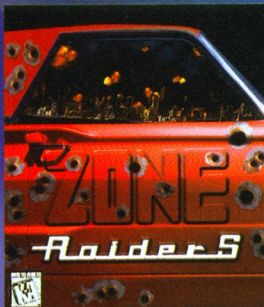
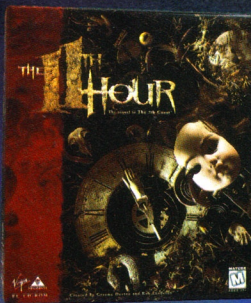
GT Interactive Software

Williams Arcade Classics

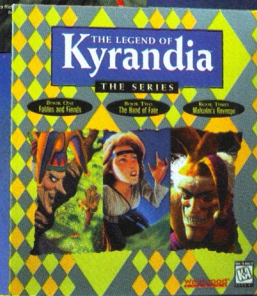
Enter the Arcade Hall of Fame and get ready for heart-stopping action, reflex-stressing excitement and incredibly addictive gaming with 6 all-time classic hits: Defender, Joust, Robotron 2084, Bubbles, Defender II and Sinistar. You also get a multimedia retrospective of text, images and movie clips never seen before. Plus, you'll meet the games' creators!

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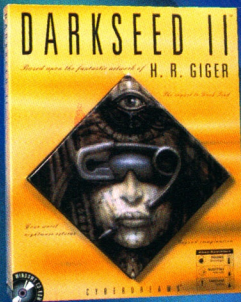
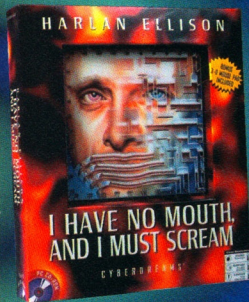
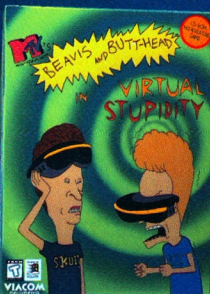
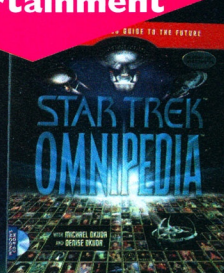
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Simon & Schuster

Star Trek Omnimedia

The comprehensive, voice-activated electronic database to the Star Trek universe. This expandable reference work is the desktop point of entry into the Federation's LCARS (Library Computer Access and Retrieval System). With photos, video, graphics, text and audio from 3 of the TV series and 6 classic feature films.

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Star Trek Deep Space Nine Harbinger

The mission? Prevent an aggressive alien race from annihilating a Federation-allied planet and save the DS-9 from suffering a similar fate. You'll encounter a galaxy of deadly challenges. Plus, interact with 5 popular characters from the DS-9 TV series.

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The exclusive CD-ROM guide to MTV's critically-acclaimed acoustic music show and marketing juggernaut. Between acts, you can walk backstage for an up-close look at rehearsals, impromptu jams and candid interviews. Plus, get full access to MTV's vaults packed with still photos of your favorite artists, bios, and actual sheet music.

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Viacom

Beavis and Butt-head

Uh, huh huh. Explore the entire world of Beavis and Butt-head. Includes 4 mini-games and 3 music videos. Features favorite show characters Todd, Daria, Van Driessen, Buzzcut, and Mr. McVicker, and many all-new characters. Plus, all new animation from MTV animation studios.

Windows 95 CD-ROM

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Pro Pinball - The Web

Get the true feel, action and excitement of a stand-alone pin-table on your PC. Includes see-everything viewpoints, a thumping rock soundtrack, in-game speech, realistic dotmatrix display, sub-games and blistering chrome ball speed with a stunning 6 ball multi ball feature.

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MGM/United Artists

I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream

Based on Harlan Ellison's short story. The adventure plunges you into the tortured and hidden past of the 5 humans. Delve into their darkest fears. Outwit the master computer AM in a game of psychological warfare. RSAC Advisory: contains violence, nudity/sex and strong, vulgar language.

PC CD-ROM

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MGM/United Artists

Darkseed II

A psycho-thriller adventure you'll never forget. The macabre artwork of Academy Award winner H.R. Giger, creator of the horrific creatures in "Alien" and "Species". The story continues the unending nightmare of Mike Dawson as he recovers from a nervous breakdown from his earlier encounters with the ancients.

Windows CD-ROM

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Accolade

Unnecessary Roughness 96

The ultimate simulation of football. All-new player animations and great realism. See every play up close and personal with the new Action Cam - back angles, reverse angles, side angles, helmet cameras, and instant replay! Four-time Super Bowl referee Jerry Markbreit makes the calls.

PC CD-ROM

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Inescape

Bad Day on the Midway

Plunge into a sinister soap opera set in a carnival of the damned where the characters are the rides. Seek the hidden escapes encrypted in this twisted game, but beware, for surprises abound everywhere and nothing is quite as it seems.

Windows CD-ROM

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New World Computing

Heroes of Might and Magic

New lands have been discovered and you must rise to the challenge of conquering them. You must carefully manage all the resources or you will surely be defeated. Recruit your heroes, gather your armies, and lead them to victory. Customized computer opponents and unlimited replay.

Windows 95 CD-ROM

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Might And Magic Trilogy - **\$19⁹⁹**

Sierra

Conqueror A.D. 1086

A riveting, medieval action simulation. Wage real-time battles, compete against rival knights in 3D tournament events, and create castles and commerce in an epic pursuit of land, wealth and power. Real-time, first-person POV, hand-to-hand combat and tactical warfare.

DOS CD-ROM

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Sierra

Torin's Passage

A funny, fascinating story from the mind of Al Lowe, full of comical twists and surprises. Travel to 5 unique worlds within worlds, with dozens of outrageous characters and humor. Comes with puzzles to challenge even the most experienced players; but program on-line hints ensure no one gets "stuck".

Windows 95/Windows 3.1 CD-ROM

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Sierra

The Beast Within: Gabriel Knight 2

Where shadows end, the hunt begins. In this sequel to the critically-acclaimed Gabriel Knight: Sins of the Father, solve a series of mutilation murders thought to be the work of werewolves. The only hope for deliverance lies in the most desperate of schemes.

Windows CD-ROM

\$54⁹⁹

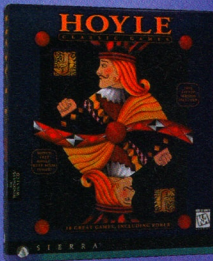
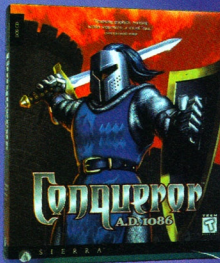
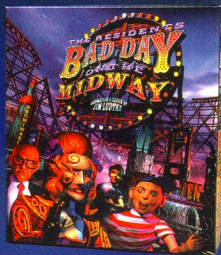
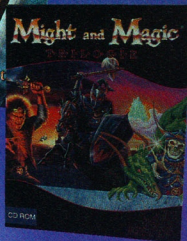
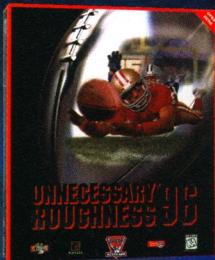
Sierra

Hoyle Classic Games

Adults and kids alike will enjoy honing their skills and learning new games with a lively group of challenging, interactive players. Adjust the amount of player personality with the "attitude meter". Authentic, accurate, and a great value. Includes: draw power, bridge, cribbage, gin rummy, hearts, solitaire, old maid, crazy 8's. Plus, backgammon and checkers.

Windows 95/Windows 3.1 CD-ROM

\$27⁹⁹



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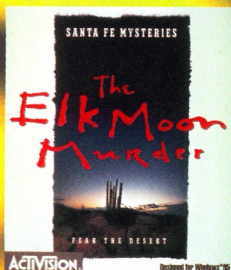
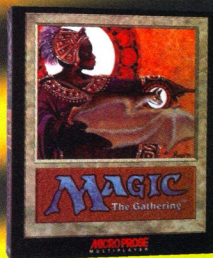
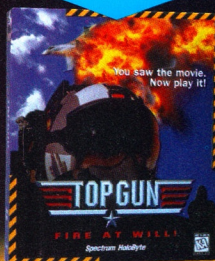
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Spectrum HaloByte

Top Gun

Relive the awe-inspiring experience of the popular feature film "Top Gun" — only this time, YOU are Maverick! All the thrills of this fast-action dogfighting escapade come to life in this explosive, interactive adventure.

PC CD-ROM

\$49⁹⁹

Spectrum HaloByte

Grand Prix II

Experience all the challenge and excitement of Grand Prix racing! Fend off challengers at Monaco, blast down the straightaway at Monza and take the checkered flag at Barcelona. Control real Formula 1 race cars around real tracks against real teams, all in breathtaking lifelike graphics, wicked smooth motion and roaring Doppler sound effects.

PC CD-ROM

\$49⁹⁹

Coming Soon!

Spectrum HaloByte

Magic: The Gathering

Travel through the magical world of Shandalar to meet strange creatures and duel evil wizards in the ultimate quest to thwart a plan of world destruction. Use multitudes of Magic and build impenetrable defenses using supernatural spells and rare artifacts.

Windows 95 CD-ROM

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Activision

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

Join Harry Jr. as he tracks an evil Mayan warrior spirit to rescue his kidnapped father, Pitfall Harry. Run, swing, skate and bungee through deep dark rainforests, raging waterfalls and Mayan ruins that reek of unearthly dangers.

Windows 95

\$49⁹⁹

Activision

MechWarrior 2: 31st Century Combat

A struggle for power fuels a society of warring clans. Customize one of 15 BattleMechs with over 20 unique weapons systems and brave ultra-realistic 'Mech vs. 'Mech combat on a variety of interplanetary landscapes. Prepare for 15 unique head-to-head scenarios via modem or network. Multi-player NetMech allows up to 8-player LAN combat — individual or teams!

PC CD-ROM

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Activision

Commodore 64: 15 Pack

It was the computer to own in 1984. The games created back then had real finesse, and the size of your imagination was more important than the size of your hard drive. Great games never die. Now you can save games at any point, play multiple games in multiple windows concurrently, and more!

Windows 95 CD-ROM

\$29⁹⁹

Activision

The Elk Moon Murder

You are the detective assigned to Santa Fe's most puzzling case. With your Native-American Indian partner, John Night Sky, you must interview a quirky group of locals. Pick up leads and follow hunches while racing against the clock. Solve this mystery before someone else is killed.

PC CD-ROM

\$29⁹⁹

Activision

Earthworm Jim

Packed with all the action of an arcade game and the challenges of a computer game. Slither, crawl and blast your way through 20 levels of cosmic earthworm madness. Travel from New Junk City through Snot a Problem to the final battle with Queen Slug-for-a-Butt.

Windows 95 CD-ROM

\$49⁹⁹

Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you!

Interplay Descent

Welcome to 30 levels of the most mind-bending, stomach-churning action game ever. Lunge straight down mine shafts, twist around never-ending tunnels and fight your way past robotic menaces. Invite your buddies to dive into the action together with head-to-head combat and cooperative two-player modem and eight-player network support.

DOS CD-ROM

\$39.99

Interplay Descent

Strap in, boot up, and hang on for a ride that will test the limits of your sanity! Lunge straight down mine shafts, twist around never-ending tunnels and fight your way past robotic menaces in an environment that's truly 360° 3D...move up, move down, shoot everything everywhere. Play head-to-head with a modem in 8-player network games with Applitalk or MacIPX.

Mac CD-ROM

\$59.99

Interplay Descent: Levels of the World (Mission Disk #1)

The only authorized Descent level add-on disk. Contains more than 100 of the best all-new user-designed levels including an all-new level from Parallax, the creators of the original Descent. Over 50 hours of maniacal, 360 degree, multiplayer action with 8-player Network, Tournament mode and 2-player Head-to-Head support. Requires full original Descent program.

DOS CD-ROM

\$27.99

Interplay Stonekeep

Step into the mystery of Stonekeep and begin a quest through dark corridors, treacherous sewers and subterranean realms of faeries, magic and the living dead. You'll discover a world where darkness reigns and where you become part of a detailed story line that unfolds to your commands.

DOS CD-ROM

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Gametek Jeopardy - Platinum Edition

Includes over 4,000 new questions and answers directly from the show. All new digitized video and over one megabyte of digitized audio of "Master-Mind" Alex Trebek. Now, high-quality enhanced video and audio makes you feel like a real contestant. Alex actually calls you by name when it's your turn to provide the question.

Windows CD-ROM

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Gametek Road Warrior

Fire up the thrusters on your Hot Hover Car and get ready for the "ride of your life". From urban jungles to dangerous desert lands. With the help of the rebel forces, you've got fire power that's second to none! Failure is not an option!

PC CD-ROM

\$37.99

Gametek Escalation

Two leading World Powers engage in an arms race for World Domination. Only one will survive by pushing technology to its limits...and beyond! Your survival depends upon how well you manage armies, navies, money, oil, minerals and grain. Artificial Intelligence challenges your war tactics and strategic global planning.

PC CD-ROM

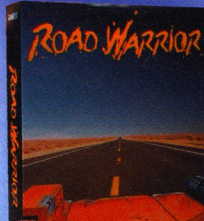
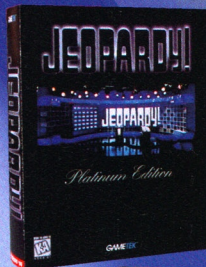
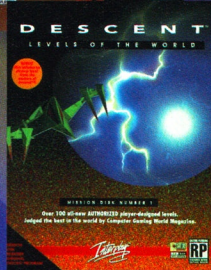
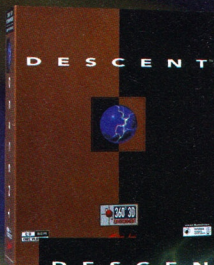
\$37.99

Digital Pictures Maximum Surge

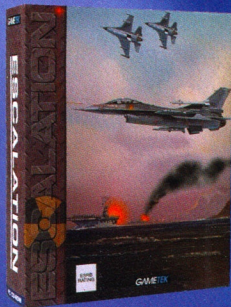
A fast-paced action game that immerses you in a world you can control and manipulate. Blast away an evil dictator's forces in a post-nuclear desert. Choose from over 50 interior and exterior environments for customized gameplay.

PC CD-ROM

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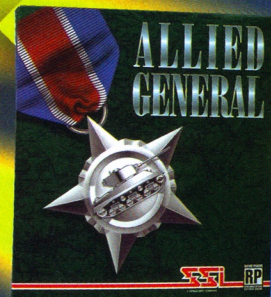
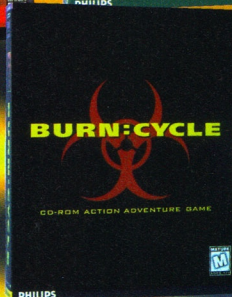
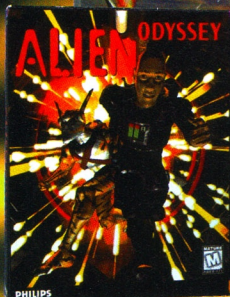
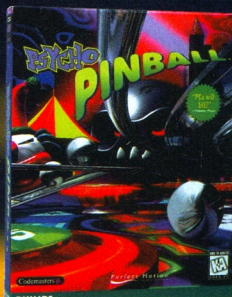
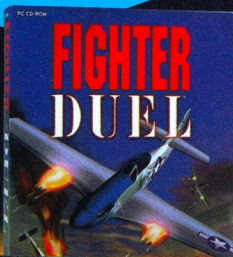
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Philips

Fighter Duel

Face up to 8 WWII computer enemies in 7 realistic tactical scenarios or fly against a human opponent via modem. Experience the ultimate in PC graphics as you scan the skies with multiple cockpit views, camera angles covering 360° and a photorealistic, fully-functional instrument panel.

PC CD-ROM

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Philips

Psycho Pinball

Choose from 4 themed tables including Psycho — The Gateway multi-table challenge. Pure pinball adrenaline begins at Psycho Fun Fair — hold on for the ride of your life. Eleven panel games including blackjack, fast fishing and cup confusion. Features up to 4 flippers per table plus realistic 3-way tilt, and more!

PC CD-ROM

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Philips

Alien Odyssey

After crash landing on a foreign world, you're rescued by an alien. To rendezvous with your mother ship, you'll have to help the alien and his kind repel an army of robot invaders first. For Mature Audiences. Includes animated violence, blood and gore.

PC/MAC CD-ROM

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Philips

Burn Cycle

Plunge into a surrealistic world where dozens of characters compel you through mind-expanding challenges and one shocking conclusion.

PC/Mac CD-ROM

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Mindescape

Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat

In the strife laden world of Warhammer there is no rest for the weary, no battle easily won. Outwit troops of evil skaven, goblins and orcs with your armies of humans, elves, and dwarves. Command 25 diverse armies against 30 enemy armies in real-time arcade-style battles. 3-D, scrolling landscapes with 360 degree views.

Windows 95 CD-ROM

\$47.99

Mindescape

Allied General

First there was Panzer General. This time you're Allied General in WWII, storming across Europe with your battle-trained troops to stop your enemy—the Panzer General commanding the Axis forces!

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Mindescape

CyberSpeed

Blast into Torhorrow's Ultimate Race! Anything goes as you fiendishly maneuver your airship to outdrive, outshoot, and outrace opponents in this death defying motorsport of tomorrow, televised to billions around the world. View instant replays after every race. It's all Speed. Weapons. Fun.

PC CD-ROM

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Mindescape

Azrael's Tear

You are a thief and must journey to the Templar Knights' vast medieval underground sanctum to retrieve a most holy prize: the Grail. Be careful. You'll find that unraveling the mysteries of the temple can be a very painful challenge indeed.

DOS CD-ROM

\$44.99

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Maxis

Marty and The Trouble with Cheese

Marty is curious and high-spirited and has a tendency to get into trouble. He sure is lucky to have a friend like your child to help him find his way home in time for his birthday party! Lets children as young as 2 years old communicate with the computer and interact with the story the way they communicate with people — by talking! Requires a microphone for interactivity, but even without one, your child can listen, watch and enjoy the story.

Windows 95/Windows 3.1 CD-ROM **\$32⁹⁹**

Maxis

Full Tilt! Pinball

Forget the quarters! This is as real as it gets — just like playing in an arcade. Nothing but fast action, pulsating music, exciting sound effects and craftily designed, great-looking, fast-playing pinball tables. Period. Features 3 great pinball tables in 1 package.

Windows 95 CD-ROM **\$32⁹⁹**

Power House

Glider

A challenging arcade-style game which appeals to kids and adults alike. Navigate the pitfalls of the common household. To make it to the next room, position yourself over air vents without getting caught in the cross-drafts or getting destroyed by other obstacles.

PC CD-ROM **\$29⁹⁹**

Power House

Chess Kids

Takes the intimidation out of learning to play chess and replaces it with fun! Instead of traditional chess pieces, animated characters help guide children through the games with helpful tips and humorous comments.

PC CD-ROM **\$29⁹⁹**

Power House

10 Awesome Games

Contains an exciting collection of arcade-style entertainment ideal for kids, ages 5 and up. Experience adventure on Chicago streets with the Blues Brothers, help Titus the Fox find his lady love, survive the stone-age with Prehistorik and more.

PC CD-ROM **\$24⁹⁹**

Discis Entertainment

Karma: Curse Of The 12 Caves

Immerse yourself in the mysteries of the Orient. Solve a series of riddles and challenges to free life-giving waters of a mystical fountain. Amazing 3D graphics.

PC CD-ROM **\$49⁹⁹**

Discis Entertainment

Jewels Of The Oracle

Embark on a brain-teasing adventure into the magnificent City of Nisus to face the challenges of the Oracle. Once there, you won't want to leave.

PC CD-ROM **\$49⁹⁹**

Microforum

Virtual Corporation

Murder, sex and suspense...in the most exhilarating race to the presidency. The first totally voice-controlled (keyboard optional) CD-ROM game for Windows 95 takes you into a cold-blooded world where only the strong survive. Nothing is as it seems. Intrigue, relationships, espionage and constant surveillance are but a few of the elements you must learn to master first.

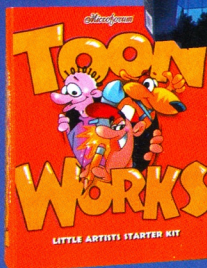
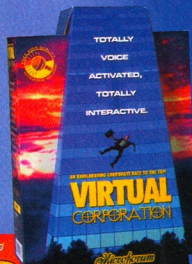
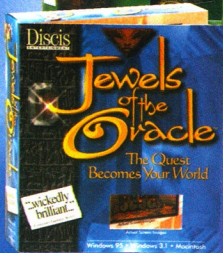
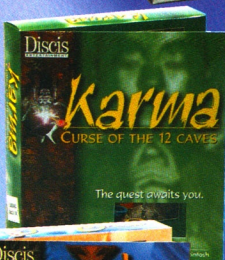
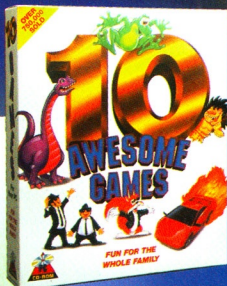
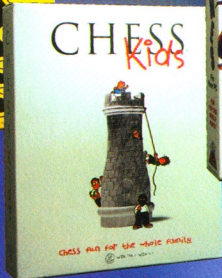
Windows CD-ROM **\$59⁹⁹**

Microforum

Toonworks

Let your children learn how to create original cartoon characters, colorful greeting cards, fantastic posters and many more masterpieces! Images are constructed using artwork supplied with the program and then manipulated in real-time for truly comical results. Learning to draw has never been so much fun!

Windows 95/Windows 3.1 **\$42⁹⁹**



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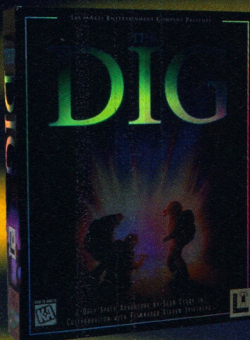
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Lucas Arts Rebel Assault II

A totally fresh, original fantasy in the Star Wars universe — it's more like an interactive Star Wars experience than a game. Features live-action video and full-screen, fully-moving imagery. Technologically advanced engine. Game editor lets you customize difficulty levels.

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Lucas Arts The Dig

Sift through the ruins of an ancient, alien world and assemble the necessary technology to take a team of astronauts home. In the process, greed and self-preservation erupts as an important discovery tips the delicate balance of the group. An original and compelling story based on an idea by Steven Spielberg.

Windows CD-ROM

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Lucas Arts TIE Fighter Collection CD

Here the roles of good and evil are reversed — and you are now an elite pilot for the Empire. Combines the original TIE Fighter game plus the original campaign disk, Defender of the Empire, both upgraded for CD-ROM play. Includes a brand new bonus campaign with nearly two dozen new missions.

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Lucas Arts The LucasArts Archives, Volume I

Great games. Great value. Great fun. Bundle includes Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, Sam & Max Hit the Road, Star Wars Rebel Assault Special Edition, Maniac Mansion Day of the Tentacle and Star Wars Screen Entertainment for Windows. Bonus Super CD Sampler contains Full Throttle, Dark Forces, The Dig, Rebel Assault II and TIE Fighter Collector's CD-ROM.

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Bring the last of the great Babylon stations to your desktop! Contains a hi-tech screen saver featuring actual video clips from the series — and over one hundred colorful images, each accompanied by unique customized sounds! This numbered, collectible package includes a certificate of authenticity in each box.

Windows CD-ROM

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Sound Source Star Wars Trilogy

Blast thru multimedia hyperspace! The official, Limited Edition CD-ROM collection of multimedia clips from Star Wars, The Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi. Includes over 200 video clips of your favorite moments plus over 260 audio clips (8-bit and 16-bit versions).

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Infotainment World Books

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Steers you through the rough flights and flights with game-winning strategies and tips. Plus find out how to customize your own difficulty settings for interesting challenges. Also includes a behind the scenes look at creation of the game, and more!

Books

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Infotainment World Books

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Provides you with a comprehensive walk-through, maps, hint section and an exclusive "Making of" section, exposing Sierra's photo-retouching wizardry. With detailed characters profiles.

Books

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CD Products

CH Pedals

Both novice and advanced gamers can maximize their performance during their favorite auto racing, flight simulation, or other game which supports rudder input. Speed ahead of the competition during auto racing games independent pedal action or while in flying games users can out-manuever the enemy with superior rudder support.

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Creative Labs

Modem Blaster 28.8

In addition to traditional fax/modem functionality you can play the hottest game titles modem-to-modem, browse the web, send and receive e-mail, and participate in interactive online forums from virtually anywhere in the world.

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Experience blistering fast CD-ROM performance. Unleash the power of the newest, most dynamic games and applications. Comes with Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia and QuickCD, an easy-to-use, DOS and Windows based CD music player.

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Experience the excitement of multimedia. This full-feature kit combines 3D stereo enhanced CD-quality audio, Plug-and-Play compatibility, and high-performance, quad-speed CD-ROM with some of the best entertainment and education software available.

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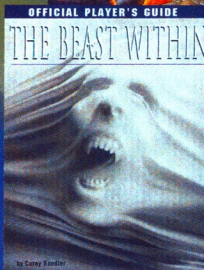
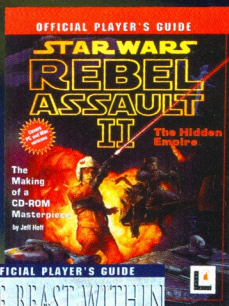
Creative Labs

Sound Blaster 16 Value

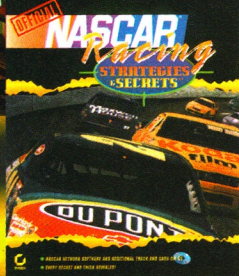
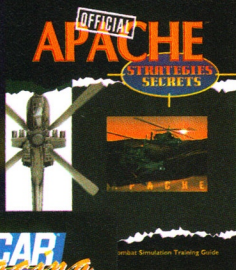
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Equip yourself well. PC pilots! Twelve programmable fire buttons are located conveniently on the flight stick handle. Save up to 4 programmed keystrokes. A single switch instantly changes the primary fire buttons from standard joystick buttons to keyboard emulator in mid-combat. New potentiometer design assures the quickest possible response time. And more!

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The exclusive guide to the amazing helicopter simulation. Gamers will get every mission completely scoped out, with tips for battling behind enemy lines in Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

Books

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Sybex

NASCAR Racing Strategies and Secrets

Start your engines and get ready to blow away the competition. Takes you inside the game and shows you how to become a NASCAR racing champion. In-depth track profiles, racing strategies, custom car configurations, and interviews with NASCAR drivers and more!

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Earthworm Jim 2 Official Power Play Guide Includes cool maps, level-by-level guides and walk-throughs, killer strategies for defeating enemies and bosses, tricks, shortcuts, hidden items, all the secret paths a worm could want and much, much more!

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The Residents' Bad Day on the Midway: The Official Strategy Guide

Determine the comatose character's identity, the truth behind "the accident," the secret of the lost gold plus locate all hidden items and levels. Then, go behind-the-scenes with the game's designers!

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Learn how to use ancient runes and magical Elf Stones, prepare herbal remedies, protect yourself from hostile magic, destroy enemies, repair the Sword of Shannara and imprison evil Brone forever!

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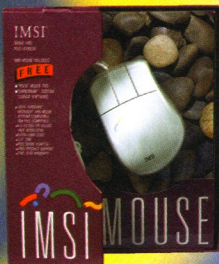
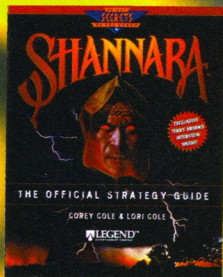
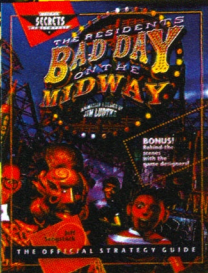
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IMSI Mouse

The natural choice for your computer. Combines a shape perfected by nature with the latest ergonomic technology to give you the perfect pointing device for any graphics or mouse-driven software. Provides precise control over the speed of the cursor on the screen.

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Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you!

Acclaim

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Seek and piece together the clues to unravel the mystery of your father's madness...and possibly your own! Face mind bending challenges at every turn. With multiple secrets, hidden clues, and macabre traps.

PlayStation **\$59⁹⁹**

Saturn **\$59⁹⁹**

Acclaim

College Slam

Match-up over 44 college rival teams in a game that couples the action packed arcade excitement of the jam-style gameplay with the heart-pounding action of college tournament play. One to 4 players.

PlayStation **\$59⁹⁹**

Saturn **\$59⁹⁹**

Digital Pictures

Maximum Surge

A fast-paced action game that immerses you in a world you can control and manipulate. Blast away an evil dictator's forces in a post-nuclear desert. Choose from over 50 interior and exterior environments for customized gameplay.

Saturn **\$59⁹⁹**

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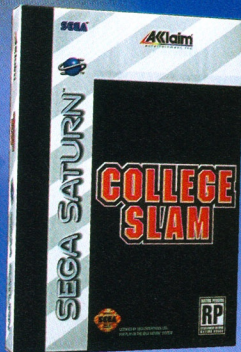
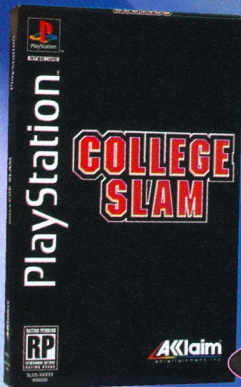
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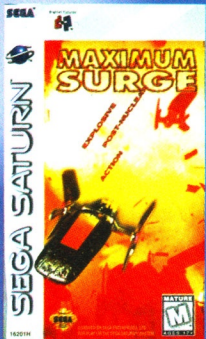
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Also
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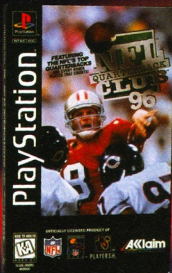
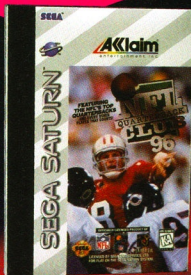
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Acclaim NFL Quarterback Club

Feature by feature, the most authentic football game ever! Features real NFL players motion captured for the most realistic football action ever plus full motion video of Quarterback Club members offering advice, tips and complements. 3D rendered stadiums and ultra-smooth cam replay to review plays from any angle.

Saturn **\$57⁹⁹**

PlayStation **\$57⁹⁹**

Acclaim Revolution X

Save Aerosmith from kidnappers who want to control the world's youth - "No music. No voice. No choice." Soundtrack features actual chart-topping songs from the band. Non-linear play and explosive power up items.

PlayStation **\$57⁹⁹**

Saturn **\$57⁹⁹**

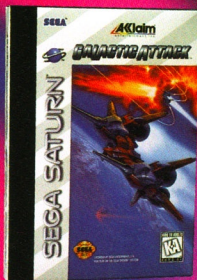
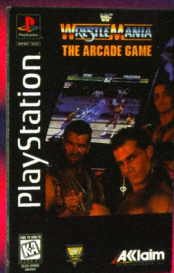


Acclaim WWF Wrestlemania: The Arcade Game

Take a ringside seat, WWF fans! Incredibly realistic graphics, more true-to-life mat-thumping wrestling moves and the awesome special moves! Play-by-play with Vince McMahon, Jerry "The King" Lawler and Howard Finkel, and wrestler taunts.

PlayStation **\$57⁹⁹**

Saturn **\$54⁹⁹**



Acclaim Jupiter Strike

Earth! Invasion! Earth! Invasion! Annihilation is imminent! Survival of the human race all boils down to you. Dual 1st and 3rd person perspectives. Multiple weapons including lock-on lasers and the particle cannon.

PlayStation **\$54⁹⁹**

Acclaim Galactic Attack

Warp into a sci-fi battle from the outer reaches of the solar system to the inner bowels of hostile enemy planets. Your only hope: lock-on lasers, explosive tracking missiles, lightning quick reflexes and a soft spot for the human race!

Saturn **\$54⁹⁹**



Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you!

Acclaim

Batman Forever

The movie event of 1995 translates into the hottest video game of the year! Battle as Batman or Robin with 125 incredible weapons, moves and attacks! Hidden surprises, head-to-head fighting option, 10 musical scores, and computer rendered graphics.

Genesis **\$39.99**

Super NES

\$39.99

Acclaim

Spider-Man: Venom Separation Anxiety

Marvel's most infamous super villain, Venom, teams with Spider-Man in a colossal 2-player battle against The Jury and 5 of Venom's alien symbiotes! Computer-rendered graphics, situation-sensitive music, secret bonus rooms and more!

Super NES **\$64.99**

Genesis

\$59.99

Acclaim

NFL Quarterback Club

Feature by feature, the most authentic football game ever! Features all the real teams. All the best quarterbacks. And every player that counts. Over 800 plays including QB signature plays. New perspective allows for up to 80 yards of viewable field.

Genesis **\$69.99**

Super NES

\$69.99

Acclaim

WWF Wrestlemania: The Arcade Game

Take a ringside seat, WWF fans! Incredibly realistic graphics, more true-to-life mat-thumping wrestling moves and the awesome special moves! Play-by-play with Vince McMahon, Jerry "The King" Lawler and Howard Finkel, and wrestler taunts.

Super NES **\$69.99**

Genesis

\$59.99

Acclaim

Revolution X

Save Aerosmith from kidnappers who want to control the world's youth - No music. No voice. No choice." Soundtrack features actual chart-topping songs from the band. Non-linear play and explosive power up items.

Genesis **\$69.99**

Super NES

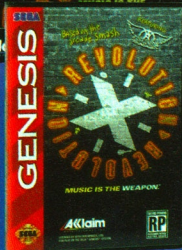
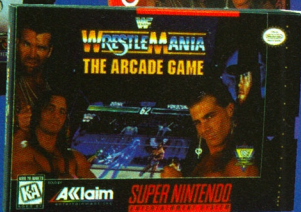
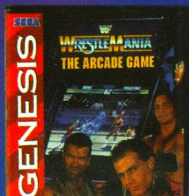
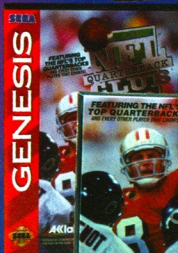
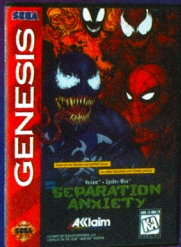
\$69.99

Acclaim

Spawn

Battle as the 1990's most popular comic book hero, Spawn, as he takes on his most brutal enemies — Overkill, Anti-Spawn, Mad One, New Breed and more! Over 40 stages, from Bedlam to the Darklands!

Super NES **\$69.99**



Acclaim

Special advertising section

electronics



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Sony PlayStation



PlayStation system with Ridge Racer game \$344.99



Sony PlayStation Core System

- Breakthru 32-bit processor
- Stereo CD-Quality sound
- Full frame video at 30 frames per second
- 16.8 million simultaneous colors
- Custom ports for up to 2 controllers and 2 memory cards
- Includes one controller

PlayStation

\$299⁹⁹

PlayStation system with Ridge Racer game \$344.99

Sony Twisted Metal

Hold your breath. You're about to go commando, battling 13 of the deadliest vehicles technology has ever created in fully interactive 3D environments. It's the ultimate 3D joy ride to survive or die. Real-time 3D combat action with complete 360° control.

PlayStation

\$59⁹⁹

Sony WarHawk

Free fly into epic air battles where 3D rendered landscapes go from the real to the unreal. Fly anywhere, anytime with total 360° control. Instantly execute real air combat maneuvers. Fly in 3 views: cockpit, back, and front camera.

PlayStation

\$59⁹⁹

Sony Destruction Derby

It's the crashes that'll keep you coming back for more. Why just race cars when you can wreck 'em? Comes with 5 tracks plus the open-arena crunch-zone of "The Bowl", 3 cars to suit every skill level, 2-player link-up capability, detailed league-cables and results, unique "director's cut" replay options, and options galore!

PlayStation

\$59⁹⁹

Sony WipeOut

Buckle in for the most extreme race n' chase action on this or any other planet. Experience the exhilaration of anti-gravity racing. It's slamin' with the hottest sounds, flashiest 3D, real-time visuals and nastiest vehicles - oh, and 6 whiplash inducing race tracks. Two-player link-up capability.

PlayStation

\$59⁹⁹

Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you!

**Sony
PlayStation**

Special advertising section

**Sony
NFL Game Day**

The new standard in football games. Exhibition, full season, playoffs and Super Bowl play, player trades, 3 interactive playing perspectives, plus incredible hits, spin moves, "jukes," hurdles, stiff arms, "swim techniques," diving catches, forearm shivers, and more!

PlayStation

\$59.99

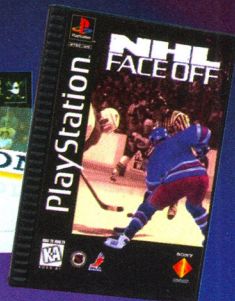


**Sony
NHL Face Off**

The ultimate hockey simulation featuring full NHL season play, multiple playing perspectives, realistic hockey animations, and fully interactive 3D environment. Plus, players' abilities all based upon their actual NHL player stats.

PlayStation

\$59.99



**Sony
Jumping Flash!**

One small leap for Robbit, robotic rabbit, one giant leap for game action. Stomp out the evil Baron Aloha and his gang of pests. Hop and soar with realistic views, perspective changes. First person perspective immerses you to a 3D fantasy planet. 18 levels of non-stop bonus stages. Ultra-responsive A.I.

PlayStation

\$59.99



**Sony
Novastorm**

In the gut wrenching, heart stopping ride of a lifetime, pilot the Scavenger 4 space fighter between canyons, over glaciers and through cities in a one-on-one showdown with the deadly Scarab X. White knuckle playability.

PlayStation

\$49.99



**Sony
The Lemmings Chronicles**

Take a walk with the Lemmings as they romp their way through 90 brand new adventures! Increasingly difficult puzzles give you the experience to conquer even the most intricate levels in the game. Bigger, better, more frantic fun for the whole family.

PlayStation

\$59.99



**Sony
DiscWorld**

Explore wacky, surreal scenarios in this manic cartoon adventure featuring the voice of Monty Python's Eric Idle. Cartoon chaos, mind-boggling puzzles and epic quests. Set in a land where dragons rub shoulders with inept wizards!

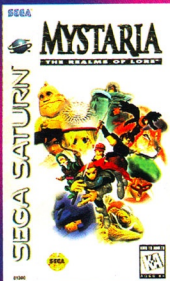
PlayStation

\$59.99



electronics **EB** boutique

Sega Saturn



Sega Sega Saturn System with Virtua Fighter

America's first Saturn took men to the moon. This one will take you quite a bit further into the next level in a new gaming universe. Get an unsurpassed virtual experience right out of the box. Immediately experience head-spinning arcade action at home. Includes all the hardware, software, cords, cables and control you need.

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$344.99

Sega Virtua Cop

A first-person experience where you put your shield, your weapon and a bit further into the next level in a new gaming universe. Get an unsurpassed virtual experience right out of the box. Immediately experience head-spinning arcade action at home. Includes all the hardware, software, cords, cables and control you need.

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$79.99

Sega Sega Rally Championship

The ultimate in pulse-pounding off-road racing! Power through turns, skid out on dirt, blast through mud, grab all the air you can handle. Phenomenal polygon-based graphics deliver superb down and dirty racing action. Four challenging courses: desert, forest, mountain, and a bonus lake course.

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$59.99

Sega Virtua Fighter 2

Brace yourself for a kick in the teeth! With arcade speed, control and graphics, revolutionary polygon graphics and changing 3D perspective, 8 different fighters, 3 different camera angles, plus replay! Got a favorite color? Have your favorite fighter wear it!

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$69.99

Sega World Series Baseball

America's favorite past time comes to life with color so true, sound so real and play so smooth, you'll swear you're at the ballpark. Challenging play modes include a 162-game pennant race.

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$67.99

Sega Wing Arms

Strap yourself into the cockpit and prepare to test your skill and your nerve as you take in the air to battle enemy forces. Select from 7 different characters and 7 different planes. Eight missions and a variety of terrains add to the thrill of battle. Three different points of view including: cockpit, chase and reverse chase.

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$49.99

Sega Cyber Speedway

Fast forward to Earth in the distant future where galactic supremacy is no longer decided by the annihilating weapons of war but by fiercely competitive hovercraft racing on the toughest courses in the universe. Get ready for a series of brutal races in futuristic vehicles equipped for blinding speed and destruction!

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$59.99

Sega Mystaria: The Realms of Lore

Once a land of peace and serenity, it's now embroiled in turmoil. Reclaim your kingdoms and regain control by relying on the special powers of a Prince, a Ninja, a Lion man and others.

Sega Saturn Core System for \$299.99

\$67.99

Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you!

Sega CD System

Turn your Genesis into a real multimedia entertainment system. Plays music CDs, CD+ graphics discs, and dozens of exciting Sega CD games with digital sound and music. Built-in memory with battery backup. Plays great sound through your TV or stereo system.

Sega CD **\$99.99**

Sega Mighty Morphin Power Rangers

Morph into action-packed combat to protect the world from the evil clutches of Rita Repulsa! Completely new game based on actual footage from the hot TV show!

Sega CD **\$19.99**

Sega Eternal Champions: Challenge from the Darkside

When 13 of the greatest fighters in history battle in head-to-head combat, you'd better put away the china and strap down the furniture! May the best man, woman or beast win! Features all 9 original members, 4 new champions, and 11 hidden characters.

Sega CD **\$39.99**

Sega Genesis 32X Adapter

Combine a Genesis and a 32X adapter to get a next-generation system that has the same power and performance as the quarter-munching machines at the mall! 40 times faster than 16-bit machines! Compatible with Genesis controllers!

Genesis 32X **\$99.99**

Sega Primal Rage

Fight to reclaim a devastated Earth from prehistoric creatures. Filled with all the savage action and supernatural elements of its arcade predecessor. Uncover hidden bonus games.

Genesis 32X **\$69.99**

Sega World Series Baseball

This is year-round Major League action. All 28 teams and real players are ready to play ball. Gives you the changing perspectives and viewpoints that make this game the most realistic baseball experience ever. Compete in League, Playoff and World Series action.

Genesis 32X **\$64.99**

Sega College Football's National Championship II

Who's the National Champion? Settle it on the field! 32 top schools with new teams, updated stats and attributes based on the 94/95 season. Incredibly realistic football sound effects that put you on the field and create your own team, players and own divisions!

Genesis **\$59.99**

Sega Genesis Core System with Columns Game

Delivers both amazing value and all new gameplay! For a great price, gamers get the Sega Genesis and Columns, one of the great Genesis classics. Includes 16-bit Genesis System, 1 control pad, AC adaptor, and auto RF switchbox.

Genesis **\$99.99**

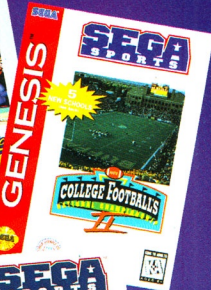
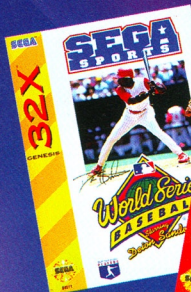
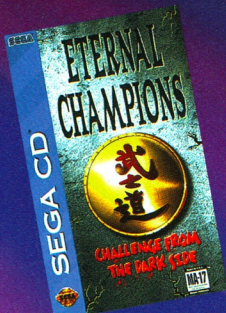
Sega Prime Time NFL Football

Loaded and ready to repeat a Super Bowl run! Once again, all 30 NFL teams and over 1500 real players are in shape and ready for game day. All new features have been added: more stats, salary caps, difficulty levels, "call for a block", user records, and more!

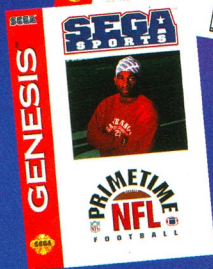
Genesis **\$67.99**



Sega CD System comes with Free Sewer Shark game!



Comes with Free Columns game!



Sega

Special advertising section

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3DO

GoldStar
3DO system comes with Free
FIFA Soccer and Shockwave!



GoldStar GoldStar 3DO System

It's not another toy. It's another technology. Packs the power of advanced multiple microprocessors. Offers sharp, 3D graphics and booming CD-quality sound. Nothing else makes entertainment and educational software come alive like this.

3DO

\$199⁹⁹

GoldStar BC Racers

Rock and roll on dinosaur-powered rally bikes as you race around more than 32 different tracks and compete against 13 outrageous opponents. Four dino-mite difficulty levels: easy, medium, hard and rockhard. One or 2 player action with split screen viewing.

3DO

\$54⁹⁹

GoldStar Defcon 5

A captivating space adventure featuring an incredible diversity of gameplay. Complex and addicting. Designed for today's more sophisticated gamers. You must not only survive the continuous enemy onslaught, but discover who (or what) is behind the sabotage of a space station.

3DO

\$49⁹⁹

GoldStar Primal Rage

The blazing arcade version of the dinosaur fighting game comes to your living room. All the hidden features and characters of the coin-op smash hit are guaranteed to tear it up!

3DO

\$54⁹⁹

Studio 3DO SnowJob

Action and violence come together in this sensual mystery combining the elements of an adventure game and a gritty crime drama. You've got 7 days to collect the evidence, steal the passwords, throw the punches, dupe the thugs, and be in the right place at the right time. Suggested audience: 18 and up.

3DO

\$57⁹⁹

Panasonic FZ10 Interactive Multiplayer System

Delivers spellbinding 32-bit, interactive realism. Designed to take you beyond the limits of ordinary video games and everyday television straight into a multimedia future. Full screen, full color, digital video with multi-CD (music, photo, video) compatibility.

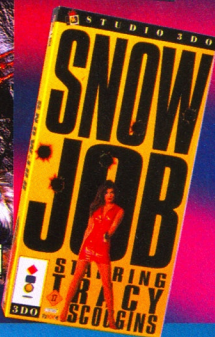
3DO

\$299⁹⁹

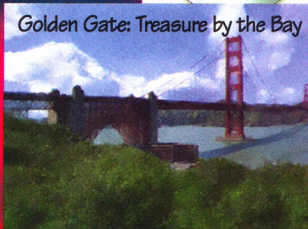
Studio 3DO Golden Gate: Treasure by the Bay

Two hundred years ago, an exiled king fled to the new world to bury his past with his treasure near the new mission in what is now San Francisco. Become a thrill-seeking treasure hunter and embark upon the adventure of a lifetime.

3DO

\$57⁹⁹

Golden Gate: Treasure by the Bay



Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you!

Atari

Jaguar Core System

This ain't no toy. How about 100X more power than 16-bit systems, color graphics, 16.7 million colors, and fast, real-world 3D animation? We're talking 64 bits of power & CD-quality sound. Power. Speed. Control.

Jaguar **\$149⁹⁹**

Atari

Jaguar CD Multimedia Player

Save the raw power of the Big Cat! 64-bits of power, 16.8 million colors, 106.4 megabytes. Incredible 3D animation. The new high-quality, double-speed CD-ROM unit plugs into any Jaguar console to deliver full-screen, true color, full motion video and audio. Even play your audio CDs to access the Virtual Light Machine light show!

Jaguar CD **\$149⁹⁹**

Atari

Highlander

Wrestle mankind from the grasp of the evil immortal, Korthan. Includes original dialog and cinepacked sequences from the animated series. Numerous puzzles to solve and items to collect that will speed you on your quest.

Jaguar CD **\$59⁹⁹**

Atari

Hover Strike: Unconquered Lands

Terrakan Pirates have taken over a distant planet. Only your state-of-the-art armored hovercraft, equipped with a rapid fire cannon and powerful missiles, can battle through 40 levels of fully texture-mapped 3D levels. Realistic 3D simulation.

Jaguar CD **\$49⁹⁹**

Atari

Myst

Use your mind to unlock the secrets of ages past. Take careful notes. Everything you see or hear, no matter how insignificant, could be the key to unlocking the mystery. Experience a first-person point of view with no distracting controls or windows.

Jaguar CD **\$57⁹⁹**

Atari

Baldies

Build your own society complete with workers, builders, soldiers, and scientists, and use them to create your own world and conquer the enemy. Stars cute, follicly-challenged characters and humorous claymation sequences.

Jaguar CD **\$57⁹⁹**

Atari

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure

You'll need lightning-quick reflexes and a discerning eye to survive all the obstacles of the Mayan jungle — and rescue Pitfall Harry. Sneak, swing, skate, and bounce through on your way. Pulse-pounding jungle soundtrack.

Jaguar **\$57⁹⁹**

Atari

I-War

When the omnipotent override mainframe's databases mutate and begin creating virus programs that clog the I-Way, an anti-virus craft must enter the world net and repair it. Extremely fast-paced gameplay which also includes puzzles and complex mazes.

Jaguar **\$57⁹⁹**

Atari

NBA Jam Tournament Edition

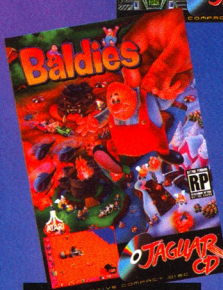
The most arcade faithful Jam yet. You will need major hoop skills to compete against the NBA's finest. Everyone's favorite players including Rodman, Ewing and Hill are all in the game. With updated player rosters of over 120 NBA stars plus hidden players, secret codes and super power ups.

Jaguar **\$67⁹⁹**

\$49.99 with the trade-in of 20 working games*

Jaguar

Special advertising section



\$49.99 with the trade-in of 20 working games*



*When you trade-in working Sega Genesis (excluding Sega CD and Sega 32X), Super NES, 3DO, Saturn, Jaguar or PlayStation games. Games must include boxes and instructions. Games without boxes, subtract \$2 each. Offer may be withdrawn without prior notice. Participating stores only. No dollars please. Some titles are excluded. Ask sales associate for complete details.

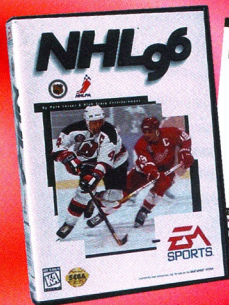
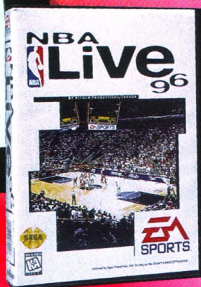
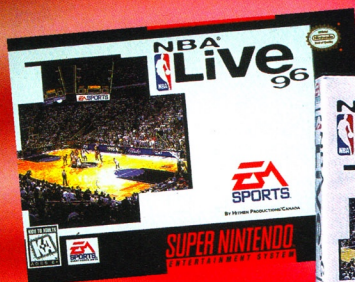
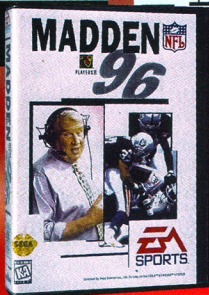
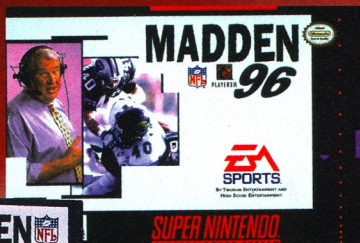
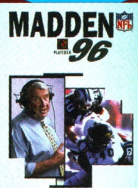
electronics



boutique

Electronic Arts

PlayStation



Electronic Arts

Madden 96

It's the real deal! All 30 NFL teams, including Jacksonville and Carolina. Get in the game with all new 3D rendered graphics and animations, redesigned formations and plays and custom TD celebrations. Madden and Summerville call all the action.

PlayStation **\$59.99**Super NES **\$59.99**Genesis **\$59.99**

Electronic Arts

Road Rash

The smash and rash hit is back and it's nastier than ever. Race against a whole new pack of rascals in the no rules, all-out combat motorcycle road race now held in 7 countries. With 5 new weapons, all new graphics, and ear-bleeding sound effects.

PlayStation **\$57.99**

Electronic Arts

NBA Live 96

New player animations and realistic strategy make it the coolest hoops game ever created on the Sega Genesis. Fresh features include one-on-one moves, tip slams and power dunks, alley oops, blocked dunks and mid-air passes. Plus new crowd chants and interactive crowd free throw action. Also includes Toronto and Vancouver expansion teams!

Super NES **\$59.99**Genesis **\$59.99**

Electronic Arts

NHL 96

This is ice hockey, not nice hockey, a fast and furious all-out assault on your senses. Skate faster, stop quicker, line it up and let it fly! Now with smarter skaters, tougher goalies, new moves and more ways to score, and all-new sound effects and music.

Genesis **\$59.99**Super NES **\$59.99**

Call 1-800-800-5166 for the store nearest you!

Crystal Dynamics

Gex

Does he kiss his mother with that mouth? The digitized voice of Dana Gould stars as Gex with rapid-fire wise-cracks and one-liners. When Gex gets stuck in the media dimension, the place where cheesy 70's television shows and movies go to retire, he's gotta kill a TV in each world to escape.

Saturn **\$59.99**

PlayStation

\$59.99

3DO

\$39.99

Crystal Dynamics

Solar Eclipse

It's pure neck-snapping, retina-tearing, cosmic speed! Your mission's to battle a computer gone HAL — with all the high-tech weaponry your top gun can handle. Set in jagged asteroid fields, fiery planet surfaces, lava filled caverns, and other sunny destinations. Forty minutes of full motion, brace-yourself video.

Saturn **\$59.99**

Crystal Dynamics

Off-World Interceptor Extreme

Extreme car crushing combat! Send a buddy to oblivion in 2 player head-to-head mode. Hate cheesy video? So do we. Bust a gut watching 2 trash talkers smack the gratuitous video. Story mode offers 26 levels of brutality with password support.

Saturn **\$49.99**

PlayStation

\$49.99

Crystal Dynamics

The Horde

Holdings gobble everything that moves — or doesn't: savory cut-chewing cows, and tasty villagers. In-action digitized video sequences. Stars Kirk Cameron and Michael Gregory. With mouth-watering texture-mapped 3D characters and backgrounds plus finger-lickin' good CD-quality music and digitized eating noises.

Saturn **\$49.99**

Namco

Tekken

Eight of the world's finest, most deadly fighters mysteriously brought together for one reason only: Money. In the ultimate battle for supremacy, where the winner goes home rich and the loser goes home in a pine box. With mind-bending, back-breaking martial arts maneuvers. All taking place at 60 frames per second in a fully-realized 360-degree 3D world.

PlayStation **\$47.99**

Activision

Return to Zork

Coming Soon!

Embark on a quest to save mankind from Morpheus, the evil ruler of the Great Underground Empire. Accumulate objects, solve numerous puzzles and get clues tinged with typical Zorkian sarcasm from characters you meet along the way.

PlayStation **\$49.99**

Time Warner Interactive

Zero Divide

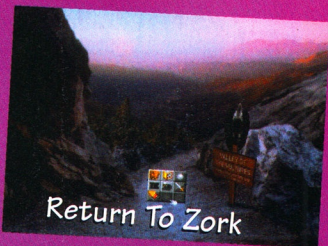
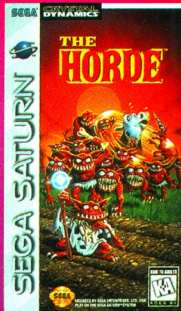
A 3D fighting fest featuring scorpion, dinosaur and various other creature opponents. View the action from unique, multiple perspectives. Eight characters. Awesome moves. Formidable fighting.

PlayStation **\$54.99**



32 Bit Games

Special advertising section

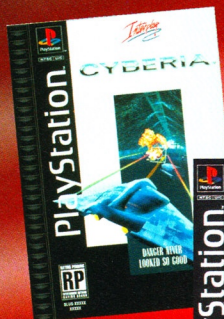
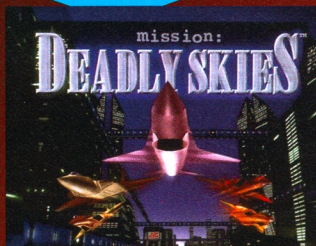


electronics

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32 Bit Games



JVC

Deadly Skies

Strap in for the deadliest of aerial combat simulations. Engage in one-on-one battles through unfriendly air space with an F16, MiG29 or F117A stealth bomber. Incorporate special weaponry with aerobatic flying techniques to experience definitive dogfighting.

PlayStation

\$57⁹⁹

Saturn

\$57⁹⁹

Interplay

Loaded

As fall guys for F.U.B., the evil Elvis impersonator with a black hole in his belly, you've got to escape from a prison planet. Once you've succeeded, "seek and destroy" is all you need to know. It's a non-stop melee of big explosions, big sound effects and arcade quality graphics.

PlayStation

\$57⁹⁹

Interplay

Cyberia

The ultimate doomsday device has just been discovered beneath the frozen wasteland of Northern Asia, codenamed Cyberia. In a realistic 3D world ruled by global terrorists, you will have to fight, fly and think your way through one of the most detailed and visually stunning games ever developed.

PlayStation

\$59⁹⁹

Saturn

\$59⁹⁹

3DO

\$49⁹⁹

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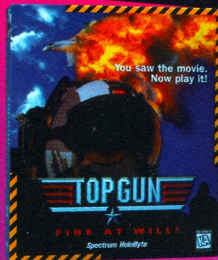
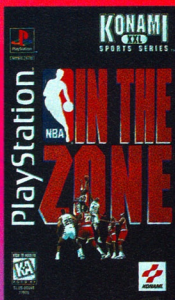
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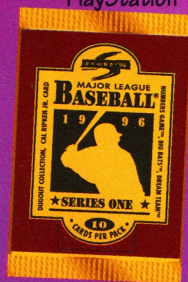
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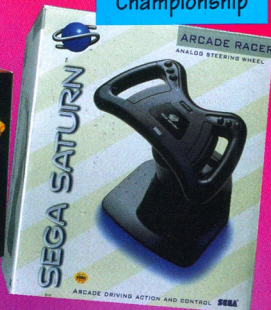


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Acclaim

Loaded PlayStation **Sega Rally** Saturn **Virtua Cop** Saturn **Virtua Fighter 2** Saturn **Battlemorph** Jaguar
Abuse PC **Beavis and Butt-head** PC **Hexen** PC **Caesar II** PC **Yoshi's Island** Super NES **Soul Edge** Arcade



Highbrow critiques of posh new games de la video

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Once again, **NEXT Generation** gives you the final word on the games that you are interested in playing. This month we take a look at some of the best titles to yet hit Saturn and PlayStation. For a full explanation of how our rating system works, see the chart below.

★★★★★ **Revolutionary**
 Brilliantly conceived and flawlessly executed; a new high-water mark.

★★★★ **Excellent**
 A high-quality and inventive new game. Either a step forward for an existing genre, or a successful attempt at creating a new one.

★★★ **Good**
 A solid and competitive example of an established game style.

★★ **Average**
 Perhaps competent; certainly uninspired.

★ **Bad**
 Crucially flawed in design or application.

PlayStation

In the Hunt
Publisher: Xing
Entertainment (Japan)
Developer: Irem

This Japanese release, an odd shoot-em-up, features a zaflog little submarine that — in spite of the game's childlike atmosphere — moves in a way that's affected by realistic physics. That is to say, the damn thing is so slow that you feel like you're swimming through Bill Cosby's favorite jello brand gelatin with a pair of fins.

Despite the fact that this was created by the guys who did *R-Type*, this game wears out your thumb because you keep pressing the control pad harder in the vain hope it might speed up the craft. Still, there's a surprisingly high level of kinetic goings-on, often with so much wreckage and incidental explosions it seems as if the whole screen is moving in separate directions, juggling so many sprites that at times there's a hint of slowdown (something that theoretically shouldn't happen on a 32-bit system, even one without built-in scrolling routines like PlayStation).

However, while very young gamers might enjoy the lightshow, the lethargic tempo and lack of originality are sure to put anyone of the age of 10 to sleep.

Rating: ★



In the Hunt never measures up to the sum of its 1,000 flying parts

In the Zone
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami

The second release in Konami's line of 32-bit sports titles is a letdown after the excellent *Goal Storm* (NG 13). In the *Zone* has a lot going for it, including an NBA



Konami's In the Zone: This is really a highlight tape masquerading as a videogame

license, but the first thing you notice is there are only five players per team — and no substitutions. There's also no full season, only playoffs and exhibitions. Once you're on the court it's clear *In the Zone* isn't a game for sports gamers, but rather a game for sports fans who might like videogames.

This is basketball at the pure "highlight tape" level. With the game's minimal attention to defense, there's lots of slam dunks and turnaround jumpers — you can practically score at will — and every basket is followed by a replay. It's symptomatic that the always-ecstatic play-by-play announcer screams, "It's a barn-burner!" every time the score gets within a couple of points, even when the game has just started and it's 6 to 8.

The supernatural two-on-two of *NBA Jam* was more honest.

Rating: ★★★

NFL Gameday
Publisher: Sony Interactive
Developer: Sony Interactive

NFL Gameday has all the essentials for a good sports game: all the players, teams, stadiums, season play, stats, injuries, and trades, and the graphics are exactly what you'd expect from a 32-bit football game.

The players are well-animated with relatively detailed uniforms, and the field and stadium are done perfectly. The sounds of crunching tackles, chanting crowds, and whistles are all CD-quality and expertly complement the entire football experience.

Gameday also gives you more control over each individual player than any game ever has and by far. When you're running the ball you can make the player dive, spin, hurdle, speed burst, juke left, juke right, stiff arm left, and stiff arm right. On defense you can switch players, dive, jump, forearm bash right or left, and swim right or left.

The offensive and defensive playbooks are big enough to keep this game fresh and the defensive AI enables you to read the safeties before making a decision on a pass. All this while the rush bears down on you. The running game is done well with holes opening up and then closing up as linebackers and safeties pursue. It's just the kind of experience any football fan must have.

Despite all these groundbreaking features, there are still



An all-around great game, *NFL Gameday* gives players more control over individual offensive and defensive players than any game previously

flaws, most notably the passing game. The two ways to break up a pass when on defense is to hit the receiver as soon as he catches the ball or to tip the ball as it comes down. The problem is that once the ball is tipped or jarred loose it bounces into the air, off several players, and is often picked off. This happens all of the time in *Gameday* and maybe once a week in the NFL.

NFL *Gameday* isn't the perfect football game, but it is the best football game ever made, so far.

Rating: ★★★★★

Space Griffon

Publisher: Attius

Developer: Panther Software

Yet another Doom clone, *Space Griffon* features a platoon of 'mech-equipped space marines sent to investigate the unexpected silencing of a lunar station. A better title would have been "Space Sloth."

While the corridors move by smoothly enough, your 'mech plods forward, contentedly bouncing along with little regard for excitement, and just in case your pulse might threaten to rise once in a while, the game regularly grinds to a complete halt so your idiot squad can break in with mostly irrelevant communiques. For this there's no excuse: *Shock Wave* enables you to continue flying while displaying a small screen of full-motion video, much more technically demanding than the two-frame animation here.

Weaving a story into a first-person shooter is potentially interesting, but it requires an improved sense of pace and much better voice talent — the delivery is so bad, so earnest and squeaky-clean, you honestly hope everyone just dies and leaves you alone. Controlling the 'mech is no joy either, as there's no way to adjust your aim vertically while moving.

A nice idea, badly done.

Rating: ★★



Stopping the action so actors can talk is *Space Griffon's* idea of fun

Toukon Retsuden

Publisher: Tony (Japan)

Developer: Yuke's Co., Ltd.

Pro wrestling is very big in Japan. At any given time you can find a dozen wrestling games on the

shelves, and this is the best of the bunch. A fighting game this isn't (wildly hitting buttons is as important as careful strategy and building combos) but if the only value pro wrestling has is that it's fun to watch, this captures it perfectly, and for entertainment value you can't touch this.

Each of the 12 wrestlers, including *Jyushin Thunder Lyger*, a masked-and-horned mat veteran who's one of Japan's most popular, has his or her own carefully motion-captured holds and throws, each more incredulous than the last. In addition to the smooth animation, it's the phenomenal attention to detail that makes this work: wrestlers visibly huffing and puffing, even while sprawled out on the mat, or waving to the crowd (each member of which is an individual sprite), goading them into cheering louder.

If there was a game that screamed for a WWF license and US release, this is the one.

Rating: ★★★★★



Toukon Retsuden brings the giddy fun of pro wrestling to PlayStation

Zero Divide

Publisher: Time Warner

Developer: Zoom

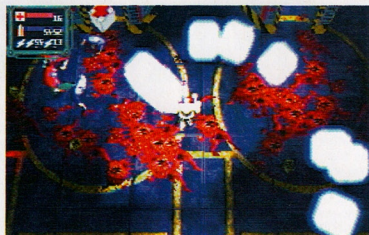
First released in Japan, where it was quite a hit, this polygon brawler now has US distribution through Time Warner. It's easy to see the attraction. The characters control well, combinations come naturally, and it's smoothly animated, close to PlayStation standards set by *Battle Arena Toshinden* (although not up to the super-fluidity of *Virtua Fighter 2*).

The action is hard-hitting and includes some original touches: a character can grab the edge of the fighting platform and save himself from a ring-out, dangling for a moment before pulling back up, and if a ring out does occur, he falls and hits the ground in a puff of smoke, à la *Wile E. Coyote*.

However, the combatants are completely mechanical in design. Perhaps we're being bio-centric, but while they're nicely realized, the lack of human factor left us feeling uninvolved once the novelty had worn off. Others may feel differently, but we'll take flesh and blood warriors any day.

Rating: ★★★

PlayStation



You want blood? Sit down *MK3*. Sure to thrill gamers and annoy congressmen, *Loaded* delivers a solid "10" on the gore score

GUTSY

Loaded

Publisher: Interplay

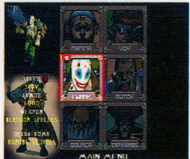
Developer: Gremlin Interactive

It probably began with the tiny screaming soldiers of *Cannon Fodder* exploding into bright red pixels with every gunshot. *Loaded* is the logical extension, stripped of everything but the bare essentials — no holds-barred action, extreme violence, and liberal doses of gore, with little subtlety and no apologies. Each of the game's six characters, designed by Greg Staples of *A.D. 2000* and *Judge Dredd* fame, are practically interchangeable, and each is a certified psychopath with little motivation other than to kill everything and reduce its enemies to splattered piles of bloody meat.

Moralizing aside, however, it's also a complete blast. While the top-down view clearly shows enemies in the next room and affords little suspense, the blistering pace makes up for it. The perspective also cleverly puts minimal demand on PlayStation's polygon engine, enabling extremely detailed textures. It looks amazing, with hardly a blocky edge in sight, and shows truly impressive light-sourcing effects as your character's weapon illuminates the darkness. It's also worth noting that the soundtrack is among the best we've heard in years, and, for once in an early next generation platform release, we can't complain about length: 15 levels of carnage should be enough for anyone.

Or perhaps, more than enough. While the levels may look different, gameplay is always the same — shoot everything that moves, blow up anything that doesn't, and find the few items you need to move on. A little more variety and imagination would have made this something more than the skin-deep visceral experience it is.

Rating: ★★★★★



You can take your pick of characters, mostly by who you think is coolest — once the action starts, it hardly matters

rating playstation saturn

PlayStation

XEROX

X-Com: UFO Defense**Publisher: Microprose****Developer: Microprose**

One of the most thoroughly enjoyable PC titles of the last few years has made its way to a home console, and it's everything you could have hoped for. Based loosely (very loosely) on the Gerry Anderson "UFO TV" show of the early '70s, X-Com pits humanity against a particularly nasty batch of invading aliens. A fine combination of squad-based combat and resource management, you have the responsibility of not only hunting aliens, but also researching recovered alien artifacts, and handling the finances of building new bases and buying new equipment.

PlayStation's version is welcome, but it's obvious the designers did little more than port over the PC game. No apparent attempt has been made to take advantage of the console's capabilities — the music, for instance, while atmospheric, could certainly have been filled out given the available CD technology, and while the battles are as enjoyable as ever, a standard PlayStation graphic library explosion or two couldn't have hurt. Also, the CD access time is noticeable and mildly annoying (although to be fair, if we weren't familiar with the PC version, we might not have cared).

Still, this is quibbling. X-Com was a smashing PC title, it's lost nothing of practical value in the translation, and makes a marvelous addition to the console market. One final note: X-Com is compatible with PlayStation's mouse, which works well and we heartily recommend — this was designed with a mouse in mind, and using a PS controller is a poor substitute.

Rating: ★★★★★

When the United Nations puts you in charge of fighting off aliens, you know you're in for a good time (left). If you've ever drooled over the PC version but couldn't afford the hardware, now's your chance — turn-based squad combat doesn't get much better

Saturn

F-1 Live Information**Publisher: Sega (Japan)****Developer: Sega**

Bar none, *F-1 Live Information* is the fastest racing game to ever hit home consoles. Accepting the challenge of making a realistic Formula-One racing game, Sega has created an amazing sense of speed as you tear through the three real F-1 courses and the additional three fictional courses.

Beyond the speed and the accurate representations of actual cars, drivers and three F-1 courses including Monaco, there is a phenomenal extra in the television-style coverage shown in a small window of the screen. As you race, the commentators and the television camera follow not only your progress but also that of the other drivers. By listening to the commentators and stealing glimpses of the second screen, you'll know what's going on in the race and what you should look out for on the track ahead.

Although *F-1 Live Information* is one of the most exciting racing experiences to ever hit a home console, it's not an extremely

gorgeous one. While not altogether unattractive, the overall graphics seemed to have been sacrificed a little for performance (usually it's the other way around). Occasional problems with the screen redraw rate, while never affecting the road itself, take some kick out of the visuals.

Despite these minor bitches, *F-1 Live Information's* white-knuckle action more than makes

up for both of these cosmetic flaws. And in the end, this is a truly exceptional racing game.
Rating: ★★★

Hang On GP '95**Publisher: Sega (Japan)****Developer: Sega**

In yet another example of Sega's new-found ability to make solid 3D racers for its Saturn, *Hang On GP '95* is a fast-paced motorcycle

ride through a landscape of texture-mapped architecture and stunning-looking geography.

Offering three different tracks, each with long and short versions, the game contains quite a bit of racing action to master and plenty of challenge for those who want to finish in a respectable place. Is this enough, however, to make *Hang On GP '95*, a sequel to Sega's 1986 arcade racer, a great game?

Technically, there are several challenges met gracefully by Sega Sports' *Hang On GP '95*, the most impressive of which being the general lack of draw-in delay (the plague of most 32-bit racers). Frame rates are high, which guarantees a smooth look. And yet, there is a certain spark missing that would give the game the kind of excitement that *Daytona USA* or *Sega Rally* offer.

In part, the problem is due to the unconventional and high-maintenance handling of the motorcycle in addition to the somewhat mindless artificial intelligence offered by the other motorcycles on the track.

Overall, however, *Hang On GP '95* is a better than average racer, but the title lacks the inspired nature of a great game.

Rating: ★★★

Touting blinding speed and sharp competition, *F-1 Live* is a racer with a notable spark. Keep an eye on opponents in the upper right-hand corner



rating saturn

Saturn

EXCELLENT!

Virtua Fighter 2

Publisher: Sega

Developer: Sega Japan

Quite simply, *Virtua Fighter 2* for Saturn is the best console fighting game ever. The reasons for its position at the top of the heap include just about everything that has ever been done right in a fighting game, including blazing 30 frames per second action, several different play modes (including a computer-learning expert mode), remarkable AI, and a general attention to detail that sets a new mark for quality game design. The most important reason for the success of this 3D, polygon brawler, however, is its unrivaled depth of gameplay.

After the initial Saturn release of *Virtua Fighter*, many wondered if the hardware had the horsepower to even come close to doing a decent VF2, which is a world apart from the original. Then came *VF Remix* and Sega showed that it could at the very least texture-map the fighters, but left questions as to whether or not it could duplicate the ultra-smooth action of the arcade on a machine that seemed to have trouble handling the rudimentary *Virtua Fighter*. However, in what may be the most dramatic example of a development learning curve, Sega has recreated the arcade phenomenon to near-perfection. With the exception of the 3D backgrounds, which have been nicely faked with 2D facsimiles, everything about the game (including the blistering frame rate and stellar animation) is represented without any compromise.

While technical elements will amaze the toughest critic, what makes this game special is its accurate representation of 10 very distinct and realistic fighting styles. Never before has there been a fighting game where the competition is not about complex button combos or pre-rendered animation sequences, but rather about matching a true Drunken Master against an expert in the art of Praying Mantis Fist. Add eight more distinct styles, with a learning process that never seems to end, details like momentum and weight, the effect of hitting someone from behind, the techniques of fighting an especially short opponent, and you will get an idea for why this game is so great.

Virtua Fighter 2 is an absolute must for all Saturn owners and a great reason to own a Saturn.

Rating: ★★★★★



Some of the most exciting action and fantastic moves ever in a fighting game can be found in VF2



Each character's background in VF2 is finely detailed, if not quite up to the standards of arcade version (top). VF2's animation is as smooth as any you've ever seen in any game (above)

Saturn

TOP GEAR



Though many believed late track draw-in was to be inevitable in 3D racers, *Sega Rally Championship* has proved them wrong (top). Mastering the techniques of driving in an off-road race will take a little time, but in the end it will become especially satisfying (right)



Sega Rally Championship

Publisher: Sega

Developer: Sega Japan

In what is quickly becoming the rule for all Sega's arcade conversions, *Sega Rally Championship* is a phenomenally good arcade translation and an impressive game for Saturn.

Graphically, you'll wonder why Sega had so much trouble with *Daytona USA* (Sega's last smash-hit racer) on Saturn, as the problems with late draw-in and choppy animation are all but gone. While *Sega Rally* is not the easily accessible racing game *Daytona* was because of its off-road nature, it's every bit as deep and quality-driven a game. Beyond the technological wizardry displayed in the near-flawless presentation, there is also a great deal to be excited about in the down-and-dirty gameplay.

Taking a racing game off the paved track presents its own set of challenges which are met extremely well by this game. Not only do the cars have an amazing feeling of weight and realistic handling, their reaction to the road as it changes from loose sand to muddy trenches to intricate paved stretches is nothing short of remarkable. In a split-second your car reacts to the change in conditions and as the driver you must know how to handle any surface that comes your way. While most racing games require only that you do well on a particular track to win a race, *Sega Rally* links together three separate tracks in rally-style, making it necessary to learn quite a bit of track before you'll even start getting close to a victory. When you do finally manage a first-place, however, you'll be rewarded with a fourth bonus track.

From the gorgeous graphics to the unrivaled handling properties and awesome two-player mode (an amazing demonstration of how to balance reduced graphic display with no loss in gameplay), *Sega Rally* is a symbol of all the reasons to be excited over 32-bit gaming and, more specifically, Sega's arcade translations to Saturn.

Rating: ★★★★★

TEMPEST 2000

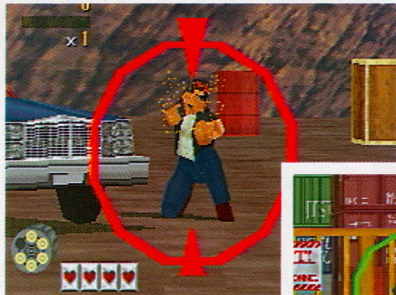
<http://www.Atari.com>



rating saturn 3DO

Saturn

STUNNING



With all the gameplay and superb graphics of the arcade version, *Virtua Cop* for Saturn is an arcade-perfect conversion and a sure hit among Saturn owners (top). Shooting bad guys is the name of the game, plain and simple (right)



Virtua Cop

Publisher: Sega

Developer: Sega Japan

After hearing that Sega was working on a polygon-based light-gun game for the arcade called *Virtua Cop*, many wondered just what it was thinking. A little better than a year later, as *Virtua Cop 2* hits the arcades, *Virtua Cop* is one of the most eagerly anticipated titles for Saturn and is turning the heads of many who'd already written off Sega as a contender in the race 32-bit. VC for Saturn is every bit the game AM2 first designed for the arcade. With dazzling graphics, first-class animation, and a soundtrack that's worthy of any Hollywood production, VC is the first really good reason to buy a light-gun game.

While you're not likely to win an argument that VC is a thinking man's game, you're also not likely to find anyone with the will power to resist picking up the Sega Stunner (the Stunner?) and squeezing off a few rounds. The premise is simple — shoot the bad guys, don't shoot the hostages, and try not to let yourself take any hits.

Ironically, what makes VC so great is exactly the element that everyone was, at first, skeptical about. Making the bad guys rendered on the fly not only adds to the 3D effect of the game, but it also enables each character to be regionally sensitive to your shots. In other words, if you shoot someone in the knee, the character actually reacts as if he'd been shot in the knee. This totally eliminates the hit or miss polarity of other light-gun games and adds a whole new level of detail to the genre.

One slight letdown is in the limited replay value of this home version. The three lengthy sequences (in both normal and an added mirror mode) offered are more than enough for the arcade environment, but they leave you wanting more in the home version.

Rating: ★★★★★

High Velocity

Publisher: Atlus

Developer: Atlus

Released in Japan under the title *King of the Spirits*, *High Velocity* is an unusual racing game for Sega's Saturn. *High Velocity* takes you into the mountains to race around a challenging set of twists, turns, dives and climbs. With a top-speed comparable to any of the big names in the racing world, this game earns high marks for being an exciting fast ride.

There are also an impressive list of options and technical achievements that go along with the racing action including absolutely no draw-in slowdown, a successful two-player mode (which offers the choice of either vertical

or horizontal split-screen), a full list of engine modifications, and an awesome replay feature with seven choices of camera angles.

High Velocity has only one major flaw which keeps it from being great. The fact that you only race against one other car in each heat takes a great deal away from the competitive aspect of the race, and while it's not easy to win, you're left feeling empty.

With the addition of just a few more competitive cars, *High Velocity* would have been a must-have title. As is, it's a very good racing game that does everything else with a sense of confidence, grace and fun.

Rating: ★★★

3DO

Captain Quazar

Publisher: Studio 3DO

Developer: Cyclone Studios

This is the second attempt, after *Gex*, to create a mascot character for the 3DO. But it doesn't come near even that level of qualified success.

The game itself is a three-quarter view shooter to start with, and from a gameplay

perspective, it comes up short. Control is tricky to get used to and, perhaps predictably given the perspective, lining up on targets is haphazard at best. Admittedly, some of the levels are deviously designed, with hidden areas and funky ways of moving around, but the level of challenge is set way too high, especially for such a humorously angled title.

Which brings up the main

point — it just isn't funny. From its hip-hop introductory sequence, to the ramblings of Quazar's boss, to the enemy death animation, the humor has a strained quality that simply falls flat.

It's not offensive, or even in the groan category, just dull, like some cousin at the family reunion who's the only one laughing at all his jokes. Please, try again.

Rating: ★★



Racing down the side of a mountain in *High Velocity* is an exhilarating experience



In *Captain Quazar*, you're out of ammo, out of humor, out of luck. Secret passages and smartly designed levels do help make this title interesting



Level 7

Level 25

Level 42

Level 100

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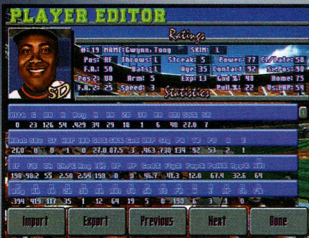
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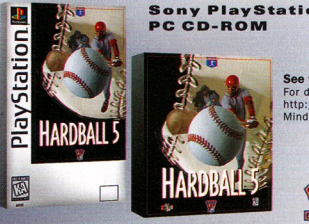
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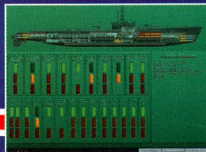
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rating 3DO

Bust a Move**Publisher:** Panasonic**Developer:** Micro Cabin/Taito

Action-puzzle games seems to have fallen out of favor recently, and perhaps with good reason — how many *Tetris* and/or *Puyo-Puyo* clones are even possible?

Well, here's one worth noting. A cult-arcade hit with a Super NES version already on the shelves for nearly a year, this one guest stars Bub and Bob (from Taito's *Bubble Bobble*) who fire colored spheres at patterned groups of similar colored spheres which slowly descend from the top of the screen. When three spheres of the same color touch, they pop and fall, and the objective (wait for it!) is to clear the screen before they reach the bottom. It's actually very simple and very addictive.

Later patterns add special spheres which do things like explode and clear what's immediately around them or clear out horizontal or vertical lines.

Nothing much has been added to 3DO's version, although with gameplay this simple, you hardly need anything else. *Bust a Move* is an enjoyable time-killer.

Rating: ★★★★★

Bub and Bob, out of work for years, make a comeback with Panasonic's *Bust a Move*

PO'd**Publisher:** Any Channel**Developer:** Any Channel

As the last survivor of an interstellar cruiser beset by all kinds of nasty critters, you have to fight your way to safety through another *Doom* clone. The thing is, you were the ship's only cook, and you begin the game armed with only a frying pan.

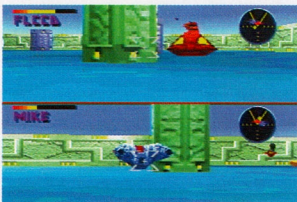
This game had its genesis, quite literally we're told, in someone's garage, as a labor of love by a handful of programmers. It certainly has the hallmarks of being someone's obsession, which is both a blessing and a curse. There's a decidedly twisted attitude behind it all, from the vaguely disturbing look of the enemies to the meticulously over-designed level layouts. It moves very smoothly, and you aren't limited to walking — this cook can jump, fly (with the aid of a

3DO**SCORE!****Battlesport****Publisher:** Studio 3DO**Developer:** Cyclone Studios

The hits just keep on coming. Put simply, we love this game. A cross between *Cyber Sled* and... football? Hockey? Definitely a contact sport of some kind — *Battlesport* is just what the name implies. You choose between six different assault hover tanks, then plunk yourself down in any of 50 different arenas to duke it out one-on-one. The twist here is that while it's possible to simply blow up your opponent, the point of the whole exercise is to grab the ball that's spinning around the arena, then try to hold on to it long enough to shoot it into the goal. *Battlesport* really feels like a sport, completely different from more straightforward, kill-or-be-killed games like *Cyber Sled*.

For a 3DO title, it's especially impressive. True, the textures on each modeled object (with the notable exception of the tanks, which look glossy even when relatively close) are simple, but every polygon is rock-solid. The frame rate, and in turn, gameplay, are as fast-paced as you could ask for. Best of all, it stays that way, even during the two-player split-screen mode, and this is where the game really kicks into gear. As with any split-screen, having your view so vertically limited is distracting, but the sheer fun and excitement of competing in this game against another human player is incredible.

There are also some 27 different power-up items which can either be equipped before the match or strewn about the arena at random, including shields, cloaking devices, and missiles that can automatically cause your opponent to "fumble." It's different, and highly recommended.

Rating: ★★★★★

Pay attention to the goal — It's the "sport" half of *Battlesport* that sets it apart (top). Few action games of any variety can compete with the game's two-player mode (left). Blowing up the other guy, then slamming the ball home for the winning point, is nothing if not exciting



If you can figure out where you are, you might appreciate the "differentness" of *PO'd*

found jet pack), and even do back flips. However, many of the levels are so intricate, with textures and color schemes that tend to blend in with one another, that it's also

extremely confusing and often more frustrating than enjoyable. It's well done, very well done, but too tricky for its own good.

Rating: ★★★★★**PGA Tour Golf '96****Publisher:** EA Sports**Developer:** EA Sports

EA's signature golf series is back for another installment. This time you have a choice of three courses, River Highlands, Sawgrass, and Summerlin, and up to four players can participate in a single round on any course, or a tournament of all three — and basically, that's it.

The focus of the game is "jump in and play," and on that level, it succeeds. The familiar one-two-three approach to taking

a stroke is used (one tap of the button to begin, one to stop the backswing, and a final one to meet the ball), and with little practice, you can be on the green



Those familiar with the *PGA Tour Golf* series should feel right at home with this one for 3DO

rating jaguar

In two every time. There are options for wind, and how damp the course is, and the usual "play as pro or amateur" settings, but little attention is paid to realistic details like ball spin or foot stance. The CD-supplied announcer (as with most golf commentators), mostly just states the obvious.

The casual gamer might find it diverting, but obsessive golfers will be left wanting more.

Rating: ★★★

The Last Bounty Hunter

Publisher: American Laser Games
Developer: American Laser Games

American Laser Games' light-gun titles are much like Ramones albums — there's nothing wrong with owning one, and lots of people enjoy 'em, but you really only need to have one. After that, you've about had the full experience, and picking up another one mostly means paying for a different box.

ALG has gone back to a Western setting for *The Last Bounty Hunter* (ah, if only it were the last), and it has all the usual ALG stuff: five stages of four sequences each, so-so FMV with mildly out-of-sync audio, bad acting, and, since all its games are originally designed for the arcade, the odd enemy who comes out of nowhere and blasts you without warning (on the theory that now you know he's coming you'll cough up another 50¢ and try again).

Also, as we've said before, if you don't already own a light gun, don't bother with any ALG game, as the on-screen cursor tracks so slowly you couldn't possibly hope to shoot anything fast enough.

This is strictly for lovers of indiscriminating action.

Rating: ★★



Plowing through one of the many enemies in *I-War*, you are constantly in danger of enemy attack. This arena-style shooter is less than special

Jaguar

Baldies CD

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Creative Edge

In *Baldies*, you must protect a world of small bald people, definitely one of the more unusual game premises that we've seen.

Always under threat of attack, you'll have to decide, à la *Lemmings*, what kind of Baldies you'll need (Builders, Soldiers, Scientists, or Workers) to succeed in your mission of peace and happiness. Featuring cute graphics, literally hundreds of levels, and a novel game premise, this title is definitely a game worthy of a second look.

The real strength of *Baldies* is its freedom of gameplay. It's completely up to you as to how responsibilities are to be delegated as well as to decide what they are to be. There's also plenty of fun in seeing what the Baldies will come-up with on their own when you've pointed them in a particular direction. With the Scientist Baldies constantly working on new inventions, the Builder Baldies building houses for the creation of more Baldies and Soldier Baldies off fighting the enemy, you'll never know exactly what to expect next.

Baldies is a great puzzle and action game for a few minutes or few hours at a time.

Rating: ★★★

I-War

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Imagitec Design

An arena-style shooter, *I-War* consists of a chain of different rooms all filled with enemy crafts eager to destroy you and stop your cleansing mission.

Moving from one room to the next via secret passageways and

Jaguar

SWAN SONG?



Exploring the surface of a distant planet in *Battlemorph* can be an exciting prospect (top). Being able to take your futuristic craft underwater adds a new side to this free-flying action game (right)

Battlemorph CD

Publisher: Atari
Developer: Atari

Battlemorph is an exciting free-flying action game that truly (and finally) shows off Jaguar's 3D abilities. While fast-moving, the title maintains impressive smooth animation and includes multiple play perspectives as well. And though the graphics are fairly rudimentary, the developers orchestrated a genuine sense of style in the design of both landscapes and enemy targets.

As the pilot of a futuristic war-plane, you're responsible for taking out enemy fighters, destroying vital ground targets and collecting important items for the success of your mission. Controlling the sleek fighter takes a little getting used to, but with some practice the craft becomes easy to handle.

But what makes *Battlemorph* so good is the inclusion of underwater areas to explore. Diving in and out of the darkened water creates a taste of suspense missing from many action games and doubles the exploration time of each planet. With the inclusion of hidden underwater items and passages, this game is one of the few to use water as more than ornamentation and it uses it very well. There is a slight problem, however, with the above-ground geography drawing-in at the last second, but with the aid of a well-equipped radar and extensive map screen, you'll have no problem navigating your way through the game. There's also quite a bit to be said for the visually impressive rendered sequences that bridge together each level of the game.

In the end, *Battlemorph* is a truly innovative action game and a must-have for Jaguar owners.

Rating: ★★★★★

special transport pods, *I-War* takes you through the paces with a constant threat of danger from every direction. And a two-player mode that pits you against an opponent in a fight-to-the-death match is also included.

Unfortunately, *I-War* scores below average in several categories including graphics,

innovation, and most dramatically, gameplay and control; but it does well with its soundtrack and the two-player mode, which recalls Namco's *Cyber Stead*.

Sadly, the game's sluggish control keeps this title from being more than mediocre. There's very little here to get excited over.

Rating: ★★

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PC

Hardball 5**Publisher:** Sport Accolade**Developer:** MindSpan

Accolade's *Hardball* series has always delivered great arcade simulations of America's best-loved sport. And *Hardball 5* finally delivers some of what its predecessors lacked — good statistics. The stats are precise, and completely adjustable for the budding manager in us all. You can



Even off-season challenges are possible through network options in Sport Accolade's *Hardball 5*

configure just about any aspect of the game, trading players, adjusting uniforms, and even changing the team logo.

Hardball 5 also delivers the arcade play expected by fans of the previous games. The graphics are beautiful, and the interface can be as simple or as complex as you like. Al Michael's well-known voice finally perfects the play-by-play that was so annoying in the previous games of the series. And now that there's a modem and network option, you can be guaranteed of a challenging game even in the off-season with like-minded baseball fans.

Unfortunately, *Hardball 5* still isn't without flaws. The arcade aspect is weak in the area of control — it took forever just to figure out how to hit the ball. Fielding can be slow and inaccurate, creating loads of frustration on what should be an easy fly-ball out.

This latest addition to the *Hardball* series is a good, solid one, but there's still a lot of room for improvement.

Rating: ★★★
Empire 2: The Art of War
Publisher: New World Computing
Developer: White Wolf Prds.

Any serious computer strategy gamer has heard of, if not played, *Empire*. *Empire Deluxe*, released shortly after, managed to improve on some minor details of the first, but never overshadowed the sheer power of the original. Although *Empire II: The Art of War* carries the prestigious name of the first title, it comes nowhere near the exquisite gameplay and intensity of its predecessor.

First off, it's a completely different game, and it's not an improvement. The single battle scenarios (no world conquest this time) that come with the game are varied, enabling battles in any time period from the Neolithic to the space-age, but there's no meat on them. Some are frustrating, and sadly, few are satisfying.

The scenario builder, though marvelously complete in capability, is tremendously difficult to grasp. You almost need to be an experienced programmer to understand it, and there's so many



The Art of War is a completely different game than *Empire*

variations for each scenario, it ends up being an overload. Only the most patient gamer will actually spend the time to figure out how to make it work.

The bottom line? *Empire* is a great game. *Empire II* can only be described as a disappointment.

Rating: ★★**Entomorph****Publisher:** SSI**Developer:** SSI

SSI seems to be proving that it doesn't need TSR's Advanced Dungeons and Dragons license to produce great fantasy games. The

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rating pc

PC

HERE COMES ANOTHER ONE...

Hexen: Beyond Heretic**Publisher:** Id Software**Developer:** Raven Software

Fans of the popular first-person shooter, *Heretic*, will need no introduction to this sequel from the action gurus at Id. *Hexen* takes everything that was good about *Heretic*, and makes it even better. In a battle against the second of the three Serpent Riders, players can choose between three different character classes: Mage, Warrior, and Cleric, each with certain abilities and weapons the others lack, which adds a replay value that earlier first-person shooters have lacked.

Although the graphics are disappointingly blocky and pixel-filled, there's plenty of extras to make up for it. The screech of a hawk in flight, the sigh of the wind as it blows leaves across a courtyard, and even the grunts of the monsters you battle sound eerily lifelike as you make your way through the world.

Hexen's world is vast. Instead of working on a system of stacked levels, there's a series of hubs. Each hub contains transports to other areas in which you must battle creatures and gain weapons and items. You have to keep coming back to previously explored areas to use things you have found elsewhere. This means that you don't just have to find the blue key for the blue door to get to the end of the transporter (as in *Doom*), even though the game does still center around finding significant keys. But with new features like the ability to jump, and even an earthquake or two, who can really complain?

Where *Heretic* may

have disappointed some *Doom* fans with its lack of intensity, *Hexen* more than makes up for it. If you're at all a fan of the first person shooter, you just can't be without this game. And even if you're not a fan, this game could make you one.

Rating: ★★★★★

These two-headed monstrosities are the first opposition you'll encounter in *Hexen* (left). Just don't let a bunch of them gang up on you. At the end of *Heretic*, you saw D'Sparil riding one of these suckers. Apparently they're being breeding, because they're all over the place (top)!

company's newest adventure in the world of Aden, *Entomorph*, is a refreshing mixture containing the look, play, feel, and general play mechanics of a graphic adventure, but adds role-playing elements as well as arcade action, for good measure.

Nearly the entire game can be played with a mouse, but play control is frustrating, if not downright annoying. It's difficult to pick up items, and you're never sure whether you're going to talk to someone or hit them. Fighting can be extremely trying as well—and whether you win or not seems to depend on the speed with which you click the mouse button. There are several difficulty levels to the game, but no matter what, the fighting sequences always have a definite arcade feel.

The graphics detail a fantasy-land rich in story and background, with the colors and landscapes fitting the plot accordingly. And solid theme music gives the game an atmosphere of suppressed

tension. All in all it's a fully loaded graphic adventure, if you can deal with the quirkiness of the game's interface.

Rating: ★★★

It might be simple, but the combat in *Entomorph* leaves a whole lot to be desired

TekWar**Publisher:** Capstone**Developer:** IntraCorp

Nevermind the fact that this game is based on William Shatner's books and the television series "TekWar." Forget the fact that



It seems that if you like William Shatner, you're just gonna love this little gem of a game, *TekWar*

William Shatner stars in the grainy full-motion video cut-scenes interspersed throughout the game. And ignore the storyline direct from the TV show. And finally, after blocking out all of this nonsense, if you whittle down to the core of this game, you get an abhorrent duplicate of *Doom*, which is a great game.

TekWar makes little sense. You can't walk around with your gun out, or the police will try to

arrest you (in the time-honored method of opening fire). Yet a gunman can fire at you 10 feet away from the same armed guard, and the officer won't react at all. Pull your weapon out to take care of the baddie, and you're probably going to end up with five flatfoots shooting at you including the original bad guy.

The few good elements about this game are in its move away from the standard first-person fare. You can take a subway to another part of the level in some cases, and the complexity of the levels is such that you're able to explore several buildings in a single block, providing a realistic feel for traveling in a city.

In the end though, it's always more confusing than helpful. Only fanatical fans of "TekWar" or Bill Shatner should get this one, and even they probably won't like it.

Rating: ★**Destruction Derby****Publisher:** Sony Interactive**Entertainment****Developer:** Psygnosis

While this is a straight port from Sony's PlayStation, there's never been anything like it before. The realistically modeled crashes and continual updates to the vehicle artwork make you feel like you're really smashing up cars. Since you can choose to play three different variations, from straight racing to full-out destruction derby, there's plenty to offer fans of the racing genre.

What's really impressive here is the smoothness of gameplay. There's no jerkiness or access stuttering, and it really feels like you're playing on a PlayStation, especially if you're using a joystick for control. The only real negative is the lack of an added zoom level—it's so damn hard to see the cars around you, it can be frustrating when you're trying to line up that perfect smash.

But all quibbling aside, this is a game that will literally suck you in with its simple challenges, and with the network and modem options, *Destruction Derby* will suck in your friends, too.

Rating: ★★★★★

The "Destruction Derby Mode" is ingeniously made up of vehicles bashing each other, namely yours

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Abuse
Publisher: Crack dot Com
Developer: Crack dot Com
It seems that some of the wizards at Id Software have been working on projects other than *Quake*. Crack dot Com is a small company, started by three men, one who (Dan Taylor) still works full-time at Id. But with its newest title *Abuse*, the company has proved that even small companies can come out with big games.

Abuse is a side-scrolling platform shooter with a whole lot to offer. Although it only has the bare bones of a story, the action-packed title has everything it needs to be a great arcade classic — intuitive play control, a variety of weapons, creatures, devices, and traps (upon entering a room, the floor collapses and hordes of monsters surround you; in another, by running through a door you trip automatic lasers which will incinerate your foes). On top of all this, there are scores of secrets to be ferreted out.

The game runs in several different resolution modes. We recommend that you start in 320x200 res because you can see

all sorts of secret passages in the higher resolutions, and it's nice to know that when things get tough, the tough can get going.

The interface is simple to use, becomes quickly transparent, and sound effects are both varied and fresh. Even with all of the extras, however, the most intriguing thing about this game is the surprising depth of puzzle challenge that's locked into it. You won't make it to the end simply by being quick on the mouse button, you'll have to think. In the end, this makes victory even sweeter.

Unfortunately, there's really no story included in the game at all. While that's not too terrible a crime, it would have been a nice touch to have a reason for the mass destruction you inflict.

Even so, there's enough pure action to keep you coming back for more. And along with an easy-to-use level editor, *Abuse* is certain to keep fans happy for hours at a time.

It's definitely one of the best platform shooters to appear on the PC in a long time.

Rating: ★★★★★

PC

UH...THAT'S COOL

Beavis and Butt-Head

Publisher: Viacom NewMedia

Developer: Viacom NewMedia

The humor of *Beavis and Butt-Head* is not for the faint of heart and neither is their new, graphic adventure *Beavis and Butt-Head in Virtual Stupidity*. Even so, these MTV junkies' new title may be one of the funniest games to ever hit store shelves.

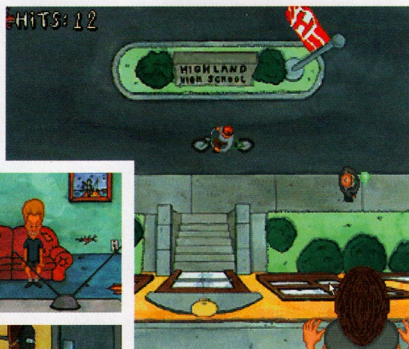
You'll control the disgusting duo in their not-so-glorious attempts to join Todd's gang, a character known for the violence he inflicts on the pair. As you move through the game, *Beavis* and *Butt-Head*'s ridiculous approaches to problem-solving create situations that will leave you on the floor laughing. The game flawlessly mirrors the MTV show, from the art to the voice acting to the script. Even though the title has plenty of animated sequences, gameplay, fortunately, never takes a back seat, and the title stands on its own as an excellent graphic adventure.

Viacom has also included several minigames within the larger adventure. These action-oriented subtitles can be run without needing to play through the whole game, and are designed to help *Beavis* and *Butt-Head* in their aspirations. The minigames add humor and an arcade quality just when the things start to get a little old.

But, as mentioned earlier, the humor of this title is not for everyone. If you don't like *Beavis* and *Butt-Head*, you'll hate this game. However, if you find sleazy, off-the-wall humor to be at all amusing, this title is a must.

Regardless of the content, the interface and smooth design of the game make it a great graphic adventure. This game rules!

Rating: ★★★★★



One of the minigames, *Hock-A-Loogie*, pits your spitting skills against helpless victims. Is this tasteless? Yes. Fun? Yes (top). Home sweet home (above left). Don't cha hate it when you miss that all-important final leap (left)?

rating pc genesis super nes

PC

CARPE DIEM

Caesar II

Publisher: Sierra On-Line

Developer: Impressions

Gather your laurel leaves and hop in. *Caesar II* is a classic strategy game that puts you in a seat of power during the rise of the Roman Empire. Starting off with a small province, your job is to create a thriving metropolis and expand your nation's area of control. This title is an innovative mix of *SimCity*-type building strategy and wargame campaign.

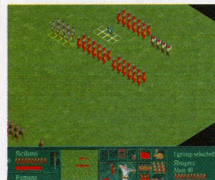
City building is standard as sim games go. You can build a variety of structures, and as you research, you're able to build bigger and better ones. There are many interesting events that take place, from riots to natural catastrophes. Using your forum of loyal advisors, you'll also manage taxes, idle Plebes, and the building of a personal army.

But where *Caesar II* really soars is in its deviations from standard *SimCity*-style play. You'll expand out from your city to outlying villages and trading ports, building roads and security structures to guard against bandits as you go. Eventually an encounter with a band of invaders may occur, in which case the game transforms into a simple yet elegant wargame. By defeating your enemies and building vast empires, promotions will come and your power will skyrocket.

The graphics are superb, and with the simple interface, it's easy to get immediately into the game with minimal instruction.

If you're a fan of good ol' building strategy, and you are ready to enjoy some simplistic wargaming, this is definitely one to check out — the end result is outstanding building simulation.

And you don't have to wear a toga to play it.
Rating: ★★★★★



Armies clash on the field of battle (top). The Forum is where you keep track of the details needed to rule a province (above). Connecting outlying towns is imperative to survival (right)

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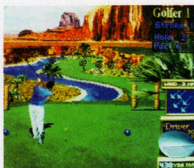
Arcade

Peter Jacobson's Golden Tee 3D Golf

Publisher: Incredible Technologies
Developer: Incredible Technologies

Extensive in detail and strong in both feel and gameplay, Peter Jacobson's Golden Tee 3D Golf from Incredible Technologies proves to be a lot of fun. And frankly, golf games in general, ain't that fun to us, so that's saying something.

Using the new, improved handy-dandy, hip...trackball (surely proving to be a revival in the '90s), you swing through three pleasant, 18-hole courses (Oak Valley, Ocean Point, and Cactus Canyon). You're also equipped with all of the most sophisticated technical information you can handle — wind direction and mph, exact yardage to the nearest tee, club choice, a bird's-eye view of the particular hole you're hitting for, and when you're in close for the



Golden Tee 3D Golf's trackball enables great control over your drive's distance and accuracy

putt, the angle and amount in feet of the slope you're on.

The graphics are a little jaggedly digitized and are slightly too bright to be realistic, but not enough to deter from the feel and sound of the game's surreal golfing action; and by the time this goes to press, Incredible Technologies will have delivered national modem play to the game which will post the daily top 10 scores in the country.

This is a great golfing game that's even fun for anti-golfers.

Rating: ★★★

NBA Live '96

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: High Score

The arcade-style play of NBA Live '96 on Super NES may appeal to some folks, but the game's essential lack of defensive play and offensive strategy make this cart pale in comparison to Genesis' version as a simulator.

All you really need to do on offense to score points is to dunk, and then dunk, and then dunk yet again. (Yes, if you like to dunk, this is your game.) And while the inclusion of a steal button makes defense a little more significant in the two-player game, the gameplay here still ends up being dunks, steals, dunks, and so on.

Even with these flaws, there is no better basketball game on Super NES. But the Genesis version is far superior.

Rating: ★★★★★



Heck yeah! If you're into nonstop dunks and only minimal defense, you're gonna like NBA Live '96

Super NES

MARIO'D WITH CHILDREN

Yoshi's Island: Super Mario World II

Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo

The long-awaited follow-up to Super Mario World, Yoshi's Island, does a good job of picking up where the original left off. Although it would be nearly impossible to capture the magic of a Mario game without Mario as the main character, it's encouraging to see that Nintendo can still produce a mammoth side-scrolling adventure with enough charm and sophistication to capture the hearts of Mario fans from long ago.

The most impressive features of Yoshi's Island are its size and playability. Strewn with bonus levels of all kinds, much like the original, this game will keep your dinosaur friend hopping in several different directions. You'll find yourself baffled at the task of completing this gargantuan game, but you'll definitely enjoy trying.

Rating: ★★★★★

Carrying baby Mario on his back is Yoshi, and he's responsible for the care of the industry's most popular hero (top). Borrowing from the graphic style of Super Mario World, Shigeru Miyamoto's Yoshi's Island displays its simplistic charm (right)



Arcade

CUTTING EDGE

**Soul Edge**

Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco

Finally, a clear sign has convincingly arrived, proving the fighting genre in the arcades really is improving. Just months after releasing *Tekken 2*, on the tail of Sega's newest release,

Fighting Vipers — and most definitely in the hopes to upset the arrival of *Virtua Fighter 3* — comes *Soul Edge*. Artfully conceived, smooth-moving, beautifully lighted, and deep with four-button combination moves, this new weapon-style combat game is sure to grab gamers and pull them in.

Eight warriors take part in combat-style arena battles with ferocious gameplay, using weapons as complex extensions of hand-to-hand-style combat in ancient empires, mystic glades, and archaic feudal countries. *Soul Edge* clearly takes after Takara's PlayStation hit *Battle Arena Toshinden*, but uses the bigger, faster arcade units to eliminate any slowdown.

And unlike the *Tekken* series, *Soul Edge* is full of charismatic characters: Seung Mina, a woman warrior with an axe-ended staff; Sophitia, the valkyrie with short sword and shield; Rock, a hugely muscled warrior cloaked with a bear's head who wields a massive battle axe; Mitsurugi, a shogun warrior with shogun sword; Taki, a female assassin with short sword; Siegfried, a heavily armored knight who surely carries the world's biggest sword (like *Toshinden*'s Duke); Volio, a bald Italian gypsy who carries three knives in each hand, and a Lei Long, armed with nun chakus. The sharp, blocky polygonal look so apparent in the *Tekken* series is gone, as each character is more realistic in look.

Namco's developers have truly mastered the art of creating shading and lighting techniques. In some battles, a realistic flock of pigeons will settle down right near the fight, while in others the day will pass into night, shadows elongating as the sun sets, stars shining, until the sun comes back up again; and in others, like the bamboo forest, an eerie shade of green glows while Shinto ghosts and shrines shine in the background.

All in all, this game adds that new element, just slightly different from the pack, filling in all the blanks with great gameplay, superb characters, unique graphics, and combines them into one solid package.

Rating: ★★★★★



What is most impressive about Namco's character design is the level of texture detail that has been applied to facial features and armory (top). Rock, with battle axe, strikes a Conan pose (top left). The Shinto bamboo forest (left)

SORRY!

No new games were made available for review this month on the following systems

Sega 32X

Virtual Boy

Neo-Geo

Macintosh

Sega CD

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N E X T G E N E R A T I O N O N L I N E

rating

32-bit gamer's guide

Your quintessential next generation gaming guide

Once again, **NEXT Generation** answers the calls of gamers across the country and provides you with a comprehensive list of all the significant 32-bit games released in 1995 and the start of 1996.

Unfortunately, we don't have room to include PC reviews in this section, nor is their space for all the 32X games — we have simply included the "highlights."

Obviously, a simple rating out of five stars is not sufficient to truly gauge a game's strengths or weaknesses. If you require further information, we suggest you purchase back issues of **NEXT Generation** (see page 32) or consult **NG OnLine**, our WWW page located at <http://www.next-generation.com/ng/>

Where a game name is accompanied by the suffix (Japan), it means the game (at press time) is only available as an import from Japan. These games will not work on US machines unless equipped with an adapter cartridge, such as the Datel Universal Adapter (contact Cybergames (415) 753-5860).

TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING
PlayStation		
Agile Warrior	Virgin	★★
A Train	SCE	★★★★
Aquanaut's Holiday (Japan)	ArtDink	★★
Arc The Lad (Japan)	SCE	★★★★
Battle Arena Toshinden	SCE	★★★★
Boxer's Road (Japan)	New Corp	★★★
Cosmic Race (Japan)	Neorex	★
Crime Crackers (Japan)	Sony Entertainment	★★
Criticom	Vic Tokai	★★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★★
Cyber Sled	Namco	★★
Cyber War (Japan)	Coco Nuts	★★
Defcon 5	Data East	★★★★
Destruction Derby	Psygnosis	★★★★
Dragon Ball Z (Japan)	Bandai	★★★
Goal Storm	Konami	★★★★
Gunner's Heaven (Japan)	Media Vision	★★★★
In the Hunt	Xing	★
In the Zone	Konami	★★★
Jumping Flash!	SCE	★★★★
Kileak The DNA!	SME	★★★
King's Field	From Software Inc.	★★★★
Loaded	Interplay	★★★★
Metal Jacket (Japan)	Solan	★
Mobile Suit Gundam (Japan)	Bandai	★★★
Mortal Kombat 3	Publisher	★★★
Motor Toon GP (Japan)	SCE	★★★
NBA Jam TE	Acclaim	★★★★
NFL Gameway	Sony Interactive	★★★★
PGA Tour Invitational '96	Electronic Arts	★★★
Philosoma	SCE	★★
Power Serve 3-D Tennis	Ocean	★★★
Power Baseball (Japan)	Konami	★
Raiden	Seibu	★★
Rayman	Ubisoft	★★★★
Ridge Racer	Namco	★★★★
Space Griffin	Atlus	★★

TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING
Tekken	Namco	★★★★
Total Eclipse Turbo	Crystal Dynamics	★★
Toukon Retsuden (Japan)	Tomy	★★★★
Twisted Metal	SIE	★★★★
Viewpoint	Electronic Arts	★
Warhawk	Sony Interactive	★★★★
Wipeout	Psygnosis	★★★★
WWF Wrestlemania	Acclaim	★★★★
X-Com: UFO Defense	Microprose	★★★★
Zero Divide	Zoom	★★

Saturn

Axial	Sega	★★★
Battle Monster (Japan)	Naxat Soft	★★
Blackfire	Sega	★★★
Bug!	Sega	★★★
Clockwork Knight	Sega	★★★
Clockwork Knight 2 (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Cyberspeed	Mindscape	★★★
Dark Legends (Japan)	Data East	★★
Daytona USA	Sega	★★★★
Deadalus (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Double Switch	Digital Pictures	★★
F-1 live Information	Sega	★★★★
Gotha (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Hang-On GP '95	Sega	★★★
High Velocity	Atlus	★★★
Last Gladiators (Japan)	Kaze Co	★★★★
Mansion of Hidden Souls	Sega	★★★
Myst	SunSoft	★★★
NHL All-Star Hockey '96	Sega	★★
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Panzer Dragoon	Sega	★★★★
Pebble Beach Golf Links	Sega	★★★
Rigford Gaa (Japan)	Sega	★★★
Quarterback Attack	Digital Pictures	★★★★
Sega Rally Championship	Sega	★★★★
Shinobi Legends	Sega	★★★★
SimCity	Maxis	★★★
SteamGear Mash	Takara (Japan)	★★
Street Fighter: The Movie	Acclaim	★★★
Tama (Japan)	Tengen	★★
Theme Park	Electronic Arts	★★★
Virtua Cop	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter Remix	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Fighter 2	Sega	★★★★
Virtua Racing	Time Warner	★★★
Virtual Hydlide	Atlus	★★★
Virtual Volleyball (Japan)	Imagineer	★
Wicked 18	Vic Tokai	★★★
World Series Baseball	Sega	★★★★
Worldwide Soccer	Sega	★★★

3DO

Alone In The Dark 2	Interplay	★★★★
Battlesport	Studio 3DO	★★★★
Bladeforce	Studio 3DO	★★★★
Burning Soldier	Panasonic	★★
Bust a Move	Panasonic	★★★★
Cannon Fodder	Virgin	★★★★
Captain Quazar	Studio 3DO	★★
Crime Patrol D	American Laser Games	★★
Demolition Man	Panasonic	★★
	Virgin	★★

TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING
Drug Wars	American Laser Games	★★
Family Feud	GameTek	★★
Flying Nightmares	Domark	★★
FIFA International Soccer	EA	★★★★
Flashback	U.S. Gold	★★★
Gex	Crysal Dynamics	★★★★
Ghost Hunter	Matsushita	★★★
Guardian War	Panasonic	★★★
Hell: a Cyberpunk Thriller	GameTek	★★
Icebreaker	Magnet Interactive	★★★
Immergency	EA	★★★
Iron Angel of the Apocalypse	Panasonic	★★★
Jammit	Street Sports	★★
John Madden Football	EA	★★★★
Killing Time	Studio 3DO	★★★★
Kingdom: The Far Reaches	Interplay	★★
Lemmings	Psygnosis	★★★★
Lost Eden	Virgin Interactive	★★★★
Mazer	American Laser Games	★★
Mega Race	Mindscape	★★
Microcosm	T&E Soft	★★
Myst	Panasonic	★★
PQ'ed	Ary Channel	★★★★
Off-World Interceptor	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Panzer General	SSI	★★★★
PGA Tour Golf '96	EA Sports	★★★
Quarantine	GameTek	★★
Rebel Assault	Lucas Arts	★★
Need for Speed	EA	★★★★
Road Rash	EA	★★★★
Samurai Shodown	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★
Seal of the Pharaoh	Panasonic	★★
Shanghai: The Great Wall	Activision	★★
Shock Wave	EA	★★★
Operation Jump Gate	EA	★★★
Slam 'N' Jam '95	Crystal Dynamics	★★★★
Soccer Kid	3DO	★★
Space Hulk	EA	★★★★
Space Pirates	American Laser Games	★★★
Star Control II	Crystal Dynamics	★★★
Starblade	Panasonic	★★
Station Invasion	Club 3DO	★★
Super Street Fighter II Turbo	Panasonic	★★★★
Super Wing Commander	Origin	★★★★
Supreme Warrior	Digital Pictures	★★
Syndicate	EA	★★★★
The Daedalus Encounter	Panasonic	★★★
The Last Bounty Hunter	American Laser Games	★★
Theme Park	EA	★★★
Trip'D	Wrap	★★★
VR Stalker	American Laser Games	★★★
Way of the Warrior	Universal Interactive	★★
Wing Commander III	EA	★★★★
Wolfenstein 3-D	Id/Logware	★★
World Cup Golf	US Gold	★★
Zharnost: The People's Party	Studio 3DO	★★★

Jaguar

Aircar	Midnite	★★★
Alien vs. Predator	Atari	★★★★
Baldies CD	Atari	★★★
Battlemorph	CD	★★★★
Blue Lightning CD	Atari	★★★
Bubsy: Fractured Furry Tails	Atari	★★
Burn Out	Atari	★★★

TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING	TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING	TITLE	PUBLISHER	NG RATING
Cannon Fodder	Virgin Interactive	★★★★	32X			WWF Raw	Acclaim	★★
Checkered Flag	Atari	★★	Brutal	Gametek	★★★	Zaxxon's Motherbase 2000	Sega	★
Club Drive	Atari	★	Cosmic Carnage	Sega	★	36 Great Holes	Sega	★★★
Doom	Atari	★★★★	Fahrenheit	Sega	★★			
Double Dragon V	Tradewest	★★	Knuckles Chaotix	Sega	★★			
Dragon	Atari	★★★	Metal Head	Sega	★★			
FlipOut!	Atari	★★★	Mortal Kombat II	Acclaim	★★★			
Highlander	Atari	★★★	Motocross Championship	Sega	★★★			
Hover Strike	Atari	★★	NBA Jam Tournament Edition	Acclaim	★★★			
Iron Soldier	Atari	★★★	Night Trap	Digital Pictures	★			
I-War	Atari	★★	Pitfall: The Mayan Adventures	Activision	★★★			
Pitfall: The Mayan Adventures	Atari	★★★★	Quarterback Club	Acclaim	★★★			
Power Drive Rally	Time Warner	★★★	RBI '95	Time Warner	★★			
Rayman	Atari	★★★★	Shadow Squadron	Sega	★★★			
Syndicate	Ocean	★★★★	Slam City with Scottie Pippen	Digital Pictures	★★			
Tempest 2000	Atari	★★★★	Star Wars Arcade	Sega	★★★			
Theme Park	Ocean	★★	Super Afterburner	Sega	★★★			
Troy Alkman Football	Williams	★★	Super Space Harrier	Sega	★★★			
Val d'Iserne Skiing	Atari	★★	Tempo	Sega	★★			
White Men Can't Jump	Trimark	★★★★	Virtua Fighter	Sega	★★★★			
Wolfenstein 3-D	Atari	★★	Virtua Racing Deluxe	Sega	★★★★			
Zool 2	Atari	★★★	World Series Baseball	Sega	★★★★			

For your information

All scores are taken from previous reviews within **NEXT Generation's** finals section. All information is correct at the time of going to press. And yes, you know what? All these games were reviewed by the gamers that we humbly consider to be the best in the whole damn business. Here's what the ratings signify:

- ★★★★★ Revolutionary
- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★ Good
- ★★ Average
- ★ Bad

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[NEC PC-FX]

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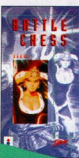
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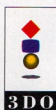
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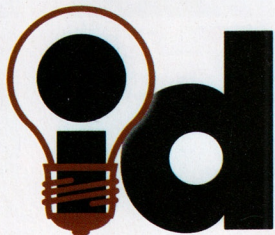
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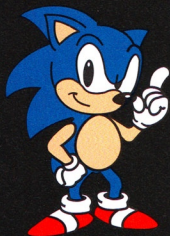
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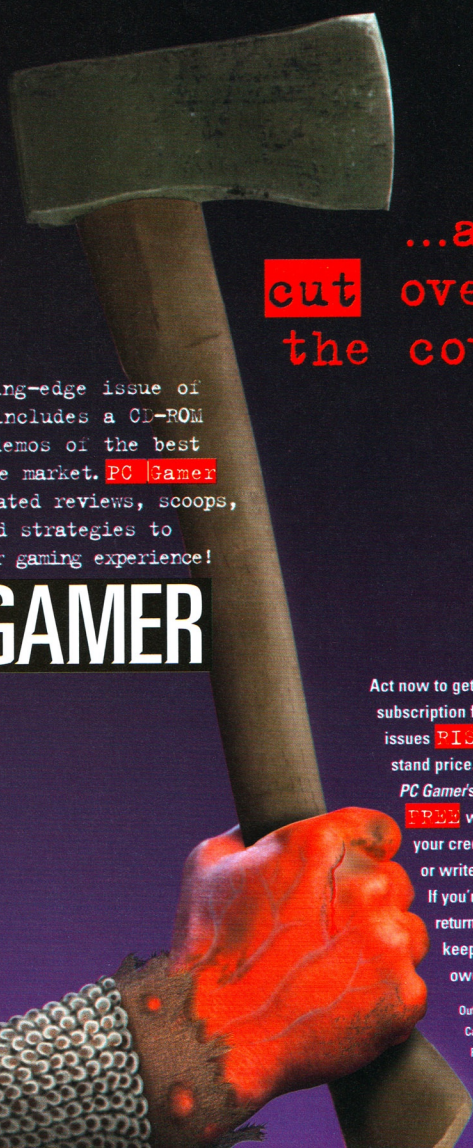
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Letters entertain you (hopefully)

I have some problems with **your system ratings in issue 12**. I would like to know how you rated the processing power of Saturn to be lower than that of the PS-X, when the clear facts on hardware show that, although it is harder to program, it has a definite advantage in processing. And the comparable software libraries of both Saturn and PS-X lead you to give the advantage to the PS-X, yet again.

You rated the PS-X, overall, 20% higher than Saturn, even though the games that come out on both systems are identical, if not better on Saturn. You rated the PS-X 40% higher in processing than another 32-bit system, the 3DO. How does this work? *Starblade*, which has been made for both systems, seems fairly comparable. It has more third party support and a larger software library than its greater-ranked PS-X.

The M2 chip technology has a processing power greater than the PC, even though it is upgradeable. Its pre-release ratings are ridiculous. You rate its third party support 20%, even though its parent company has a large third party support base. Its processing power is to be much better than PS-X, and yet, your ratings only show a 20% increase in power.

The Ultra 64, another pre-release rating, has ratings that cannot be comprehended until its release.

How can you relate to us the "future prognosis" of these systems? Do you have a crystal ball which shows you the future of the home videogame market? If so, why aren't you producing a

system that combines the best assets of each platform. In reality, you do not have such a device. The reality is that you have certain biases toward the advertising companies. Your bias is heavily favored toward Sony and Nintendo. It was obvious before the release of your latest publication, and it is increasingly obvious with your recent style of reporting. Your magazine does not provide its readers with unbiased reporting of the current technology. It provides biased speculation of what may or may not be the future.

Ryan Amos

We received a flood of positive letters in response to our recent hardware ratings feature, but as is often the case, some of you



Saturn now has some excellent games (*VF2*, *Sega Rally*), but few third party titles are very good

had problems with our classifications of various systems. First, in response to our software library and third party support ratings that place PlayStation ahead of Saturn, we still hold that the quality of the existing titles for PlayStation are a bit better than those for Saturn. These ratings were designed to reflect overall quality, and not quantity of the titles available at printing

time. And although Sega does have some excellent titles now out (*Virtua Fighter 2*, *Virtua Cop*, and *Sega Rally*, to name a few), they were, for the most part, the result of years of work by what may be the top development team in the world. Third party titles for the system so far have been disappointing and scant.

Since the videogame industry has no set true and reliable benchmarks for determining the true capabilities of game hardware, it's often necessary to look at software as a solid representative of what a system can do. Regardless of chip set, the Jaguar's raw power, geared toward making good games, simply isn't up to the capabilities of PlayStation, Saturn, or the PC. A few minutes play with any of the above machines delivers all of the proof any gamer needs. And if you believe that PlayStation and Saturn software is equal to that of 3DO's, you should get out more.

So far, 3DO's third party support (here in terms of both quality and quantity) has been anything but large. Almost all of 3DO's solid titles have come either from the company's Studio 3DO, Crystal Dynamics, or EA. And until Matsushita makes some definite plans or shows some true commitment to making M2 happen as a dedicated game machine, its support is limited.

Our Ultra 64 ratings are based on finished machine hardware specs and long consultation with developers (both inside and outside of Nintendo) who are currently working on the system. Our evaluation was not based on guesswork or company

propaganda, but on facts learned while looking at actual hardware and software.

In conclusion, **NEXT Generation** magazine is and always has been about "future prognosis" of the gaming industry. Gamers who are interested in reading about systems and games that are already on the shelf or who wish to see long pages of praise solely for the system that they chose to purchase will find solace in the pages of other magazines. And, in the absence of a "crystal ball," we base our articles and predictions on experience, research, and the opinions of those in the gaming industry.

I feel compelled to speak my mind in response to the **provocative Chris Crawford interview (NG 12)**. His ideas are of ambiguous value and freshness and undoubtedly contrived from the heart, not the wallet. He just needs to use his thoughts as a supplement, not as a couple. Criticism that is constructive is what really keeps the ball rolling.

As one can tell from the interview, Mr. Crawford is quite disillusioned with the present gaming industry, yet his proposed solutions are a bit too ambitious. He wants to implement a more complicated set of algorithms into character interaction, yet this simply is not practical nor in the best interest of we, the gamers. A game such as *Wipeout* is not meant to be complicated; left, right, faster, slower — this is the game's premise. Sure it's a basic set of commands, but damn, it is invigorating.

Mr. Crawford wants to

corresponding

concentrate more on adding interpersonal relations with the characters, straying from the visual side of the game. An RPG could definitely assimilate this idea, yet a game like *Wipeout* has no place for ideas such as Mr. Crawford's. No, this game is not "airy foam," it's pure testosterone pumping excitement. These games aren't for kids anymore; the gaming industry is changing in more ways than you think.

I leave you with this thought: I would much rather pummel my friend in the open arena of *Destruction Derby* than intellectualize with King Arthur.

Brady Fiechter

Congratulations on snagging Chris Crawford's **The Way Games Ought To Be** articles for your mag. His writing gives voice to theories that our company, Pompeii Studios, has been quietly attempting to make into reality for the last year.

Of particular interest were his ideas regarding gossip — something that one of our projects, *Sentient*, uses as a vital structural element. The organic transmission of information was one of our primary design goals, along with logical, nonlinear plot developments. Gossip and information transmission between computer-controlled characters takes the multilayered scenarios down many different avenues. It is our hope that this human interaction system will allow for maximum replayability without compromising the many stories in the game.

Sentient is a PlayStation title that we designed with a very talented group of programmers and artists at Sony Interactive's Chester studio. I hope it's one step in the direction that Mr. Crawford envisions. It's one I truly believe in as well.

Mitch Gitelman
Pompeii Studios

I don't write letters very often, especially not to gaming magazines, but I feel this is a subject that could wait no longer. What I want to know is, do companies have it in their minds that you have to

offend girls in order to advertise games? Examples are everywhere, but I've included a few examples of some of the biggest offenders in this letter.

Exhibit A. The butt advertisement [referring to Kemco's *Virtual League Baseball* advertisement]. Exhibit B. *Toshinden*. **I can't believe how many videogames are advertised with the words "wet dream!"** Not only is it

offensive and juvenile, it falls into the stereotype that all fighting gamers (or all gamers for that matter) are hormone crazed teenage boys. Exhibit C. *Wipeout*. The sexism in this one is so obvious, I want you to take a long look at this one, notice anything strange? They call attention to the idea of looking up the girl's skirt!! I mean come on, this has absolutely nothing to



Chris Crawford's controversial opinions in *NG 12* sparked both praise and outrage in gamers

do with the advertisement! Exhibit D. *Loaded*. The use of the word *Pissies* is inexcusable.

If the constant insults to women — our dignity, and our intelligence — continues, the companies will succeed in alienating what small number of female gamers who're left.

Crystal Walters
Tyndal A.F.B. Florida

What can we say? If videogame companies expect to leave the adolescent male ghetto, and reach a wider audience (with, presumably, the cash rewards that go along with selling products to the half the population they're largely missing now), they aren't going to do it with the ads you describe.

So, you're right. Pragmatically, however,

companies still have to make ends meet and right now they can make a much better living targeting and selling to a known audience, as opposed to taking a huge financial risk on an audience that no one's sure really exists.

Picking out strained examples merely to prove your point won't help you (we don't see the validity of your *WipeOut* example), but may we suggest a direct approach? If you're offended, write the companies directly and let them know what you think of their ads, and let them know they won't be getting your gaming dollars.

I'm interested in schools that teach computer graphics degrees, where I can learn digitizing, animation, 3D Studio, Silicon Graphics, and so forth — hopefully a school where there is much game programming and graphics going on. Do you know of any such places? Any leads you can give me are hugely appreciated.

Thanks for the letter. We have had numerous letters send in about this subject, and it seems that there isn't a real bonafide solution about how to get in properly to the game industry. But people are working on it.

Here are a few schools to contact: DigiPen, 1 (604) 682-0300; The Art Institutes International, 1 (800) 592-0700; Ringling School in Florida, 2700 North Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, Fla. 34234; 1 (800) 255-7695; and then there's NBCC Miramichi, NBCC, Attn: Laurie Wallace, 80 University Avenue, PO Box 1053, Chatham, New Brunswick, Canada, E1N 3W4.

Also of interest are two books published by Prima: *Behind the Scenes at Sega*, by Nicholas Lavroff, and *Inside Electronic Game Design*, by Arnie Katz and Laurie Yates, both are excellent introductory texts on how videogames are made, describing techniques and defining lexicon and technology, and providing insights by those who make the games themselves.

To get a job in the industry? Take a look at Now Hiring, starting on page 182.

Nice article about the "Top 75" list. Interesting that you chose to ignore the entire **product marketing, advertising, and promotion** aspect of the business. Face the facts. Without the creative people that bring hardware and software to market things would be very different. Next time think about acknowledging the contributions of agencies like Goodby, Silverstein & Partners whose creativity for Sega was nothing short of brilliant; and people like Tom Abramson at Sega, Dave Neubecker at EA, and others who have the vision that funds the art. For that matter, what would **NEXT Generation** look like without ads? I suppose you'd save a bundle on postage.

Mark Long
mark@www.zombie.com

There are two reasons marketing folks weren't included: 1) They don't actually affect the games; 2) We ran out of space. Having said that, we will concede that we should have made an exception for Goodby Silverstein & Partners. Its exceptional work for Sega in the '90s is one of the main reasons for the success of Genesis and Sega's successful assault on Nintendo's empire.

There is a disgusting and horrendous stereotype amongst mainstream America that the only people who use computers, or surf the net are either **short fat teenagers** who dig **Star Trek** and Chess or rich, stuck-up business-type men. I am utterly sick of the looks and comments I get from non-computer using people when I tell them I am highly involved in the Internet.

I feel **NEXT Generation** has enough of a reputation amongst many different types of people to clear this article up. I urge you to do an article on who is on the Internet.

StinkE
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The way games ought to be ...

Hi-octane game theory by **Chris Crawford**

The game industry's continued fascination with Hollywood doesn't just result in bad games. There's a big danger that it could stunt our growth forever...

For those of you who haven't caught up on your pop-psychology, "penis envy" is a concept introduced by Sigmund Freud, and like many of Freud's notions, has now been dismissed as politically incorrect.

His notion was that the female psyche is hobbled by "penis envy," which develops at an early age when little girls, playing their little naked games with little boys, realize that little boys have penises and little girls do not. Stunned by the realization that men possess something of obviously great value (ahem!) that they lack, women spend the rest of their lives trying to compensate for this deficiency.

Given the culture of the Victorian era in which Freud operated, we are tempted to suggest that the terms "career envy," "job envy," "status envy," or "freedom envy" might have been more appropriate (to be fair, Freud did acknowledge these factors). Still, the concept has utility today, if not in its original form, as a metaphor for an irrational desire to possess something one can never possess because it is alien to one's nature.

With this in mind, I propose the term "Hollywood envy" to describe an attitude that dominates the thinking of many in the games industry. We seem determined to model ourselves on the Hollywood model. The idea is an old one; the first truly public efforts in this direction were made by Electronic Arts, which introduced the term "producer" to the industry (where have you heard that term before?). Trip Hawkins made much of the Hollywood connection, pushing such terms as "The New Hollywood." It was heady stuff 10 years ago, and it fired the imaginations of many. Ever since then, Hollywood envy has played a large role in our thinking.

Consider for example, the role of a game's title screen. In the early days, the title screen served several purposes: to provide a copyright notice, to cover up long initialization times, and possibly to provide a primitive game demo for in-store use. Over

the years, the title screen has evolved into the title sequence, and is now a much more involved production. It lists the credits of all those who contributed to the project, and all those credits have grown enormously.

Now we all know that most games are put together by a small team of perhaps a dozen people, often less, yet we see credit lists that drag on and on and list scores of names. Who are all these people? If you study the credits carefully, you'll figure out that they've listed just about everybody in the company. Now why would they do that?

The answer, I think, is that a long credit list suggests something like a movie. It's kinda like a personal resume that drags

If you study game credits carefully, you'll figure out that they've listed everybody in the company. Now why would they do that?

on for five pages, listing every single accomplishment of the author. Sure, it's all true, but after a while you get the feeling that the author is trying to overwhelm you with the length of the resume. In practical terms, do we really need to list every single person who had anything to do with the game? Aren't these long credit lists just an example of Hollywood envy?

Here's another example: the desire for an awards ceremony. For years, many industry people have been pushing for an awards ceremony "just like the Academy Awards." Now there's nothing intrinsically wrong with this, but why do we need to model it on the Academy Awards? Why not the Nobel Prize or the Pulitzer Prize?

Why do we model ourselves on Hollywood? I suspect that part of it is an infantile envy of Hollywood's glamour. Oh, those Hollywood stars with all their pleasures. Wouldn't we like to be just like them? This is an ego trip.

Let's face it, folks, we will never have Hollywood's glamour. You will never see Sid Meier in a tuxedo, surrounded by flashing cameras, with Julia Roberts on his arm.

But one might ask, "What's wrong with Hollywood envy? If we want to indulge ourselves in a little harmless fantasy, what harm does it do?" I see a number of undesirable side effects arising from it; one of the sillier aspects is the undue attention we give to film techniques. Think how much money the industry has spent on live-action video. And what do we get for it? Video clips that never quite fit into the game. We interrupt this game to bring you a video clip; wasn't that impressive? I have yet to see one game in which the video was truly intrinsic to the game architecture.

Then there's the brouhaha about using widely known "name" actors. We've seen lots of products with name actors in the last year or two. What, precisely do these actors bring to the party? The value of an actor lies in his or her ability to communicate the finer shades of human emotion. What fine shades of human emotion exist in our games? If all you're doing is running around blowing things up, who cares about the feelings of the people involved?

There's a fundamental mismatch here; it's like playing Wagner at the bowling alley. Our games aren't about the emotional aspects of the human condition; they're emotionally flat exercises in puzzle-solving and hand-eye coordination, so why do we need great acting talent to enliven such puerile exercises? Hollywood envy.

The most serious downside of Hollywood envy, however, is the way it blocks us from finding our true selves. When I was a teenager, I became enamored of Mr. Spock from *Star Trek*. Like any teenager, I hadn't the faintest idea of who I really was, but I was groping about, and I liked what I saw in that character. So I tried on the role of Spock, even shaving my eyebrows at one point. I can now laugh at my excesses as a teenager, and I can even see the value of the experiment. When you're young and floundering about, trying to find your

The way games ought to be...

identity, it's a good thing to try out other identities, to put them on and wear them like a hat or a costume, to see how they fit.

But the emulation phase must pass before we can truly find our identities. I was not Mr. Spock, and never will be. Yes, it was useful to put the hat on my head and fantasize, but only as a transitional phase. The time came when I had to take off the hat and ask who I really was. Had I persisted in the Spock-identification fantasy, I would never have matured to the point of asking more serious questions about myself. I would've spent all these years playing a role that truly didn't fit, spinning my wheels trying to be something that I am not.

Thus, emulating other identities is a necessary part of finding one's own identity, but it must be put aside as part of the process of maturation. And the games industry is not doing that. We've been stuck for 10 years with this Hollywood obsession, and it's starting to stunt our growth. When I ran around as a teenager with shaved eyebrows and mock-Spock attire, I looked silly but exuberant; if I were still doing that today, in my 40s, people would shake their

If all you're doing is running around blowing things up, who cares about the feelings of the people involved?

heads sadly at my arrested development.

The time has come for us to outgrow Hollywood envy. We are not Hollywood, and we never will be. We are not "better than" Hollywood, nor "worse than" Hollywood; we are ourselves, something different and special. If the classic Hollywood image is the star emerging from the limousine with the starlet on his arm and the flashbulbs popping, then what is wrong with the image from the last evening of Computer Games Development Conference, at the Microsoft party, of hundreds of frisbees floating through the air simultaneously?

Sid Meier makes a pathetic Arnold Schwarzenegger, but he makes a magnificent Sid Meier.



The way games ought to be...

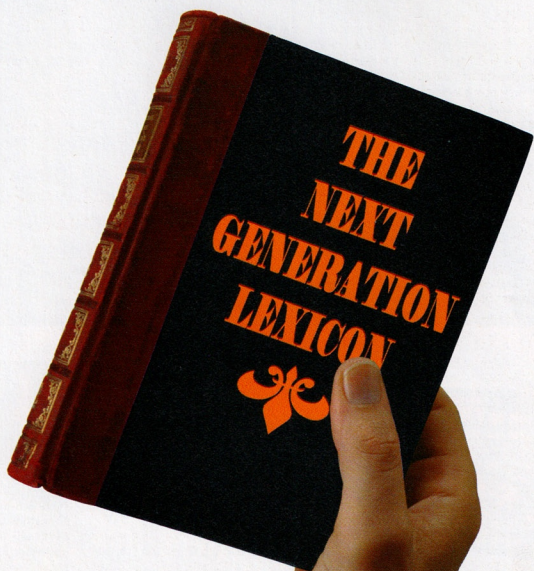
This essay was first published in *Interactive Entertainment Design*, edited by Chris Crawford. For more information contact ChrisCr@aol.com

Next Month

The definitive next generation translation guide

Are you ever worried that people don't know what you're talking about? Any industry develops its own jargon terms and the games industry is no exception. But communicating with those not "in the know" is necessary, whether you're making a pitch for venture capital or trying to explain why your friend should pony up the extra \$200 for a PlayStation over a Super NES. From alpha channel to z-buffering, next month we explain it all. May we suggest you pick up an extra copy to show your parents.

Next Generation # 15 on sale Feb. 15, 1996





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Diddy's back and better than ever.

Fasten your seat belt.


This **monkey's** coming full throttle. Donkey



Torrential rain, bloodthirsty pirates, and now your ship is sinking...have a nice day.



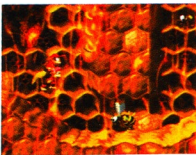
Dixie twirls her ponytail to fly chopper style—talk about a buzz cut!

Kong Country 2™: Diddy's Kong Quest™. Sleek, stylish and fully loaded. With **ACM graphics**, 32 megs and so many **new levels**, it even outperforms last year's model. But don't take our  word for it. Let Diddy take you once around the park—sunken pirate ships, roller coasters, beehives. (Watch the **sticky stuff!**)



Guess who's back in town.

Or take his new pal Dixie for a spin — literally. This chimpette flies! There are other special moves too, like the **Buddy Toss** (please kids, don't try this at home). We even threw in a bunch of multiple endings. But hey, what do you expect from the **biggest evolution** in history. Except another game that leaves everything else far behind. (Ever been behind a



Now there are smarter Kremlings out to slap your monkey around. Ouch!

monkey? It ain't pretty.)

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